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Title: Call on Me

The Cell Phone: a multi-media tool of communication amongst South African youth and how it can be used to platform youth stories for media and advertising.

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A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree Master of Media Theory and Practice

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Abstract of dissertation

This media dissertation researches the cell phone's actual and potential role as a multi-media tool of communication amongst South African youth and looks at how it can be used to platform youth stories for media and advertising. The youth's connection to the cell phone has come to mean so much more than its actual technological functions. This media dissertation investigates the cell phone phenomenon amongst the youth of today, by looking at both local and international trends, with a more intimate focus on the current trends amongst the South African youth. It will look at the sociology of the cell phone and the culture surrounding it. It will then consider new technology and how the cell phone's role may also be a tool for leapfrogging in South Africa. It is also important to consider the negative connotations that arise with the cell phone's infiltration amongst the youth.

Through analysis of recent research about the cell phone's impact on the youth here and internationally, two opposing media directions are identified: the cell phone as a tool in marketing and advertising; and the cell phone as a tool in investigative journalism. By analyzing two different areas, this media dissertation creates a broad and holistic understanding of the cell phone's potential functions through a strong literature review.

Firstly, the cell phone's function in marketing and advertising will be analyzed. This media dissertation will take into account the youth market in South Africa through a case study of one of South Africa's strategic consultancy companies: Instant Grass. Through a close look at the youth market now, it will be possible to create a greater understanding of the current trends and how to capitalize on these trends. In terms of marketing and advertising, this media dissertation then discusses an advertising exercise with a youth group studying Film and Media Studies at the University of Cape Town.

Secondly, the cell phone in terms of media and investigative journalism will be analyzed through fieldwork done with etv's 3rd Degree. This media dissertation looks at how the cell phone could be used as a tool for youth stories by looking at the parameters involved

in creating investigative stories. This chapter also takes a look at the issue of citizen journalism in the digital publishing world today and the rate at which cell phone technology is spurring this development on.

To conclude, this media dissertation will then propose a creative solution by means of a platform called Project M whereby the youth could make greater use of their cell phones in order to elevate their function in media and advertising, by overcoming their alienation from traditional media. This media dissertation then proposes that due to these two threads: marketing and advertising; and investigative journalism, the cell phone's function could be to give the youth the opportunity to contribute towards issues they deem as relevant. The airing of a youth news platform could elevate the youth's role in the media and hopefully in society too.

Chapter 2: The Cell Phone

2.1 Introduction

Cell phones are, everywhere, fast becoming one of the most technologically advanced tools of communication. It is unbelievable how such a small piece of equipment has had such massive repercussions in the world. “Yet through all its permutations – thick and thin, candy bar vs. flip phone – the ubiquitous handheld gadget remains maddeningly imperfect” (Crockett, 2006). Throughout the research conducted on this seemingly imperfect tool, the cell phone, the most common used word used to describe it throughout many papers was ubiquitous. This word aptly depicts the amazing quality that the cell phone has of “the ability to be everywhere at once” (Markins, 1995). This ubiquity is what makes the cell phone unique, as it literally becomes irreplaceable and walks with us throughout life. The cell phone is also ubiquitous in that it is found everywhere, in urban and rural areas, which means its reach across geographical space, has no boundaries.

The previous generation might have grown up playing with a colourful, plastic Fisher-Price telephone and mimicked adult conversations but the current generation is playing with the real thing, a cell phone, and having real conversations of their own. The current generation of youth are not only having their own conversations, but they are also multi-mediating a new world of entertainment, media and connection. Because of the cell phone, this generation is more switched on to the digital possibilities than older generations.

“These devices are so central to the lifestyles of today’s high schoolers that researchers are starting to refer to them as the Mobile Generation, rather than Generation Y” (Kharif, 2002). The youth of today, also dubbed Generation Y, the young generation, are quickly developing their thumbs through cell phone SMSing and it is apparent that the dominant role that the cell phone plays in their lives can no longer be ignored. This is the generation whose lives are filled with branded toys from clothing to cell phones. This generation is also a generation of instant gratification. “Today’s younger students are used to instant returns when they seek information” (Wood, 2006).

2.2 Defining South African youth

Perhaps Generation Y (arguably also the Mobile Generation) are not as youthful as the word implies. Youth is defined as “the quality or condition of being young, immature, or inexperienced; the period between childhood and maturity; the freshness, vigour, or vitality characteristic of young people” (Markins, 1995). Whilst the current youth generation definitely portrays the energy of youth, it is by no means inexperienced or ignorant, especially when dealing with technology.

The National Youth Policy of South Africa views youth as “young males and females aged from 14 to 35 years” (National Youth Commission, 1997). The National Youth Policy further explains this broad choice of age by stating:

... this definition indicates the primary target group, without excluding those who may share similar circumstances. Whilst this transition period is characterized by youthful energy, enthusiasm, ambition, creativity and promise, it can also be influenced by uncertainty, fear and alienation. Young men and women may face many challenges and threats which are unique to them as a social group (National Youth Commission, 1997, p 1).

The definition as stated by the National Youth Policy covers a broad age group and is problematic.

But the South African youth does not bear one consistent definition by age. Various sectors and interest groups define youth according to what most suits their needs. The definition by the Sunday Times Generation Next Brand Survey 2006 rates youth according to the following groups: “urban tweens (8-13 years), teens (14-18 years) and young adults (19-22 years)” (Bizcommunity, 2006). This definition seems to be the most consistent and realistic, as youth is not simply one life span sector. This media dissertation will adopt this definition as it appears to be more succinct in its organisation of youth groups with direct relation to South African youth. What the survey has uncovered prominently reflects the youth’s influence today.

The second annual Sunday Times Generation Next Brand Survey 2006 has revealed that South Africa's urban-dwelling youth constitutes a primary consumer market of substantial value, being responsible for an overall cash spend in excess of R6.454 million each month (Bizcommunity, 2006, p 1).

With such a large influence coming from the youth market, this market's influence cannot be ignored. This survey indicates the amount of influence that the youth has on "a significant proportion of the monthly spend incurred by their parents and other family members" (ibid). The item rated as the most influenced by youth out of a list of 31 items is cellular phones (see extract from table below).

Sunday Times Generation Next Brand Survey 2006

Youths' influence on parental spending on the following...	Total	Tweens	Teens	Young adults
Cellular phones	52.23	46.28	54.93	56.6

The cell phone is fast becoming the revolutionary tool of modern communication and this is especially true amongst the youth generation. As this survey indicates, the young adults sector has the greatest influence in terms of parents' choice of cell phones which can be attributed to their greater financial independence, as well as their technological experience and expertise in terms of cell phones. Yet the influence that the youth have on parental spending on cell phones amongst the teens and tweens sectors is still significantly high and remains the highest out of all of the items compared in the survey such as fun destinations, fashion, clothing, magazines, food, and deodorants.

So why is the cell phone such a popular and vital youth tool? Amongst the youth, the SAARF AMPS 2005 reflect the following in the two age groups 16-24 and 25-34 which most closely constitute the youth sector. Although this youth definition encompasses a much broader sector than has been identified in the Generation Next Brand Survey 2006, it is still relevant to analyse these figures as the teens (14-18 years) and the young adults (19-22) are represented in the age group 16-24 of the SAARF AMPS 2005.

SAARF AMPS 2005: Cellphone

	Total	16-24	25-34
Personally own cellphone	46.1%	40.5%	56.4%
Contract	6.4%	3.5%	7.0%
Prepaid	39.6%	37.0%	49.3%
Cell C	3.7%	3.6%	4.4%
MTN	19.3%	16.4%	25.8%
Vodacom	23.0%	20.4%	26.1%

As seen from the table above, an astounding percentage of South African youth actually have their own cell phone. The figures also reflect that these groups rely on the prepaid cell phone deal as opposed to contract deals which is probably due to financial reasons as the cell phone is affordable to youth through pay-as-you-go deals. The inception of the prepaid cell phone deal has allowed youth a greater access to cell phones. When viewing the networks they subscribe to, the figures appropriately reflect the order of the cell phone service provider's dominance in South Africa. Overall, Vodacom is 48.9%, MTN is 42.6% and Cell C is 8.5% in terms of overall service providers in South Africa under the base of own/use/maintain a cell phone (SAARF AMPS, 2005).

But what makes this tool so desirable to the youth sector? The cell phone has come to mean much more than its original function of voice communication. Being one of the most technologically advanced tools of communication, it now goes beyond voice communication. Now the cell phone represents more of an entertainment function by also including functions such as SMS, email, MMS, MP3 player, games, camera and video abilities. It is precisely this move toward entertainment that has influenced and captured the youth market.

The youth in post-apartheid South Africa, the 'new' South Africa, has been recognized and given a strong voice through the establishment of a democracy in 1994. With the onset of a democracy coinciding with cellular communications, the youth have an even larger than normal connection to the cell phone as a device. "South Africa has

experienced very rapid growth in the cellular communications industry, with subscriber numbers growing from zero to more than 18 million since its introduction in 1994” (Buys & Malebo, 2004). The rapid diffusion of cellular communications in South Africa is due to the fact that it is a developing country. The diffusion of a new technology in a developing country usually happens at a higher rate as it is behind other countries. Therefore South Africa’s adoption of cellular telecommunications occurred later and thus it progressed with a greater speed of adoption. The current South African market is worth an estimated of R45 billion and it is due to the technological innovations and adoptions that the cellular communications industry boomed so quickly (Buys & Malebo, 2004).

Cellular telecommunications developed alongside South Africa’s democracy and can therefore also be seen as a massive symbol for freedom of expression, especially with the youth. The youth’s role in society is eminent as it is a commonly accepted notion that the youth of any society is the gateway to the future. As South Africa is a developing country, with a developing market, the youth culture seems jam-packed with a much greater freedom of expression and choice than would be found in some first world countries. It is this freedom to be, to discover and to express themselves (via their cell phones especially) that has simultaneously resulted in them growing up so quickly. But it is also this freedom that allows them many opportunities that previously would have been deemed as unattainable. It therefore becomes central to uncover more about this youth generation, especially in South Africa, in order to understand their motives.

African Response’s *The Evolving South African Consumer* looks at the 2005 6-month SAARF AMPS and focuses on this freedom of the South African youth group.

The 16-24 year olds of today make an interesting group to track over the next ten years specifically because they are **the vanguard of the “free” generations**.

They have youthful vitality and are our leaders of tomorrow (Maree, 2006, p 2). The emphasis of the age definition here is 16 to 24 year olds which fits into the two groups identified as “teens” (14-18) and “young adults” (19-22). The research results reflect this group with clarity and also indicate how the youth of the ‘new’ South Africa

have embraced a democracy whilst simultaneously embracing the cell phone as a tool of communication, negotiation and connectivity:

Already this new generation has embraced the New South Africa more than we had dared to dream.

- 97% are proud to be South African
- 96% believe SA has the potential to become a truly wealthy and powerful nation
- 94% believe all people are equals regardless of race, gender or religion
- 94% indicate they are willing to help SA become a better place
- 89% are more confident now than before 1994
- 76% indicate if they hear people speaking negatively about South Africa they argue with them about their attitude
- 63% have friends of other race groups

(Maree, 2006, p 2)

The current South African youth can therefore be summed up as highly positive in terms of their belief in their country's future success and in their peers. The African Response report further notes how the South African youth is dominated by "image consciousness" and that they have a major need to stand out and be noticed by their peers. This is also due to the fact that non-whites were previously disadvantaged with race segregation and oppression, and thus their desire to be heard is spurred on even more. This has resulted in the emerging black middle (EBM) class.

Remember that the EBM lies at the confluence of a number of strong forces; social change driven by urbanization, 'westernisation', and rapid techno-transformation and ever present tension between traditional and contemporary culture (Vuma, 2006, p 2).

This emerging class is dictating powerful needs to current markets. The youth sector especially forms a large part of this emerging drive.

This desire to be noticed is reflected through their current interest in branded clothing and cell phones as symbols of status, especially for previously disadvantaged groups,

who now have access to such luxuries. “The increasing popularity of the cell phone is also evident, with almost half reporting that they had played cell phone games and sent text messages in the most recent 4 weeks” (Maree, 2006). It is apparent that the South African youth are empowered with a positive energy about their country. Whilst being a liberated generation they are also a generation that desires instant gratification and they are hungry to be noticed and taken seriously. The tool of a cell phone is one of the ways in which they do receive attention and cell phones have become affordable through pay-as-you-go for the majority of the youth.

With the boom of cell phones amongst South African youth, not only is the cell phone’s role about technological advancements, but it is becoming more about the symbolic values and cultural identity that cell phones depict to this generation. This is an important subject to comprehend as it has implications for the youth’s future role in the media and advertising. It is obvious that this generation has a greater opportunity to make use of this tool of communication to its utmost value. It therefore becomes fundamental to investigate the impact of cell phone culture internationally in order to compare other youth trends with the South African ones. This places the South African research in context of what is happening in the world, and more notably in other developing countries.

2.2.1 International views

This media dissertation purposefully chooses to juxtapose the South African youth culture with another developing country, China. At the MIT Communications Forum 2005, leading researchers James Katz (professor of communication and director of Rutgers University’s Center for Mobile Communications Studies) and Jing Wang (professor of Chinese cultural studies and head of Foreign Languages & Literatures at MIT) explored cell phone culture.

The abstract of the MIT Communications Forum on *Cell Phone Culture* captures the essence of the cell phone’s diversity as a tool:

No contemporary cultural artifact embodies the genius and the disruptive excess of capitalism as clearly as the cell phone. Less a telephone today than a multi-purpose computer, cell phones are game consoles, still cameras, email systems, text messengers, carriers of entertainment and business data, nodes of commerce. Particular age cohorts and subcultures have begun to appropriate cell phones for idiosyncratic uses that help to define their niche or social identity (Rauch, 2005, p 1).

This abstract describes the cell phone's diversity firstly in terms of its technological abilities. The cell phone no longer serves the single purpose of conveying voice conversations. The average cell phone also embodies multiple technological capabilities from being a simple calculator to being able to send short messages (SMS), emails, faxes, multi-media messages (MMS), not to mention being a massive source of entertainment including MP3 player, camera and video functions. The cell phone is all about embodying a variety of media tools in one's own back pocket. Yet how can these tools be utilized to their full potential? It is important thus to look at the cell phone as a "cultural artifact" and also how it is a tool of a "disruptive excess of capitalism".

Katz and Wang examine the purpose and impact of the cell phone through this forum. It is interesting to note the similarities amongst the youth market in China with that of the South African youth. "Cell phones affect our built environment, most notably in the form of widespread advertising, not just in industrialized cities, but also in the third world" (Katz in Rauch, 2005). Katz explains how, unlike the Internet, the cell phone has gained an increasing popularity all over the world and especially in third world countries as well. This is probably due to the fact that cell phones require minimal infrastructure, development and investment and that is why they are the perfect solution for underdeveloped countries like South Africa and China.

"By 2008, there will be close to 500 million Chinese mobile phone subscribers" (Wang in Rauch, 2005). Wang's research is particularly focused on the youth culture of China with regards to mobile phones. Wang proposes that in China the SMS (short message service) still dominates the mobile market, whereas the MMS (multimedia service) has

not achieved as great an infiltration yet. MMS (multimedia service) has perhaps not taken off yet due to a lack in infrastructure and also expense. In South Africa, MMS is also being adopted at a slower rate too due to the cost involved. The cost of a MMS in South Africa is expensive in comparison to SMSes. Vodacom charges 80 cents for 30 seconds (300 kilobytes) of high quality video; MTN charges 90 cents per message regardless of the message's size; and Cell C charges R1,00 per MMS. SMSes are still the most viable communication tool for the youth. "The most dominant convention in the usage of cellphones in South Africa is the SMS. SMS usage in South Africa is matching international usage patterns" (Muir & Crystal, 2005).

Whilst there is a high cell phone usage in developing countries amongst the youth, one of the issues is that developing youths are mistakenly viewed by marketers and advertisers in the same light as youths of more developed countries. In terms of the youth culture in China, the youth, also known as "linglei" have been viewed in terms of a more global youth culture which has marginalized them to some extent. As with the South African youth, viewing the youth on a global scale is ineffective as they have developed differently to first world youth. "Linglei is a word that has come to mean alternative, cool or 'the other kind'" (Wang in Rauch, 2005). It was assumed that the preferences of Chinese youth could be predicted according to norms established in marketing in other parts of the world, yet this is not so.

However, it is important to look at the developing youth individually as they have varying needs politically, socially and economically in comparison to other developed youth groups.

South Africa, like a number of other African countries, has a fast-growing black middle class that have fused western culture, with township and traditional influences to create one of the most original and potentially powerful international youth culture movements. My personal prediction is that it will eventually have a similar impact to Brazilian or Japanese youth culture on the west (Pinch, 2006, p 1).

Instant Grass (African Strategic Consultancy) describes this growth in the black middle class as the “second scramble for Africa” in terms of international youth brands. They are “led by cell phone companies and followed by fashion, drinks and automobile brands all keen to capture the increasingly disposable income of Africa’s black middle class” (Pinch, 2006). It is precisely this “second scramble” that is depicting the youth of today as with-it, sassy and switched-on. They know what they want and furthermore, they do know how to get it or how to bypass the system in order to do so (see later notes on MXit as an example of bypassing the system).

Besides the global explosion towards cell phone technology amongst the youth both locally and internationally, the sociology of the cell phone amongst different cultures also enlightens us about its developing structure and influence amongst the youth.

2.2.2 Sociological studies of cell phone use

The effect of the cell phone on youth culture stands out especially in academic research papers on an international scale. Although previous studies on youth and new technology have tended to focus more on how it promotes removing youth from their traditional culture and ties, and the individualizing effect of such technology, new studies are realizing that there are other social factors emerging. In a Korean case study, *Local Sociality In Young People’s Mobile Communications*, Yoon (2006) looks to the way in which cell phones have become interwoven with traditional sociality, by studying the cell phone amongst Korean youth, aged 16-18, in schools.

With regard to the importance of communication in everyday life, for my informants the mobile phone – which was often acquired the moment students enter high school – played a significant part in managing extended sociality (Yoon, 2006, p 160).

The cell phone therefore becomes a symbol of independence for the youth by giving them freedom from parental control and opening up a new social network in the way of communication with friends.

For most of my respondents, the motive to purchase their first mobile phone was to make contact with peers whom they hung out with or who were involved in the same school club; in contrast, according to the respondents, their parents often seemed to have a different intention – the control of children via constant phone calls to their mobile phones (Yoon, 2006, p 161).

Perhaps, unintentionally, the cell phone is serving both parents and youth well without each side knowing any different, as well as developing social ties and networks that were not previously possible. Yet while it may serve the youth's individualization, the cell phone perhaps fails to serve parents in terms of paying for cell phone bills.

However, an interesting notion that stood out in this study is one of students sharing their cell phones. This is reflective of their reaching more towards traditional social norms in their community and this is how it is maintained. "The respondents seek to maintain local sociality through the practice of 'sharing': borrowing and lending mobile phones, collectively using the handsets and circulating intimate messages within a friendship circle" (ibid). This is quite an original social function that is being practised and promotes traditional Korean values and social norms.

Yoon (2006) discovers that the cell phone's individualizing effect does not function alone. Even though the youth may be globalised in terms of culture, the cell phone also has the effect of keeping youth true to their social norms and "local" ties.

In "A comparative study of media cultures among Taiwanese and Japanese youth", Ishii and Wu (2005) compare the difference between these two groups with regards to media usage patterns.

The new communication technologies, especially the Internet and mobile phones, constitute the essential components of the youth culture. Taiwan and Japan are among the most enthusiastic countries regarding the adoption of these new telecommunication technologies (Ishii & Wu, 2005, p 2).

The study shows the result that Japanese youth make use of the cell phone and text-messaging more, whereas Taiwanese youth are more prone to Internet use. These media usage patterns are a result of different sociality between these different cultures.

In summary, the mobile culture in Japan is based on an indirect, sometimes anonymous and emotional, communication, which is compatible with the conflict-avoiding communication patterns among the Japanese youth. These characteristics are based on a strong sense of individualism. As compared with the Japanese youth, the Taiwanese youth prefers direct contact, a fact supported by the results from the qualitative data obtained from matchmaking sites. Japanese adolescents avoid direct relationships more than their Taiwanese counterparts; thus, Japanese adolescents prefer text messaging more than Taiwanese adolescents (Ishii & Wu, 2005, p 17).

This study shows how the social implications of new technologies can differ drastically from one culture to another, shaping distinctive media usage patterns.

These unique media cultures have been shaped through interactions between technologies and users. Communication behaviours are influenced by national cultures and media cultures, while media cultures are also formed by the communication behaviour patterns of people (Ishij & Wu, 2005, p 17-18).

But what do these international studies remind us about the South African youth? Foremost is the fact that “media cultures are also socially constructed through the interplay between communication technologies and national cultures” (ibid). This social interaction cannot be underestimated.

Bates (2004) explores the concept of Social Networking Systems (SNS), pin-pointing that “this ability to stay in touch with a wide range of friends may help to break down some of the walls we maintain between our various social circles”. She propagates that the new generation expects to communicate mostly via their cell phones.

In the research of *Psychosocial aspects of mobile phone use among adolescents*:

the majority of Australian adolescents are mobile phone users, with many of these adolescents first owning a mobile phone by the age of 14 years. The most likely reason given for purchasing a mobile phone was for communication between parents and adolescents, and secondly for safety or use in an emergency (The Australian Psychological Society, 2004, p 3).

There were also negative issues identified with this study which included bullying, dependence on the cell phone for safety reasons, financial problems, time spent on the cell phone and dependence on it (ibid).

There are no serious sociological studies on the South African youth and cell phone usage yet, but there are marketing case studies that are shaping advertising and are based on studies of South African youth behaviour. This is evident in the work of Instant Grass who promote that cell phones in South Africa have helped create a new, non-racial youth audience and market. What makes the South African youth market unique is twofold according to Beatty.

Definitely the interaction between class levels and by that there are two things, by that I mean the interaction between township and urban is very, very interesting and it has created a fascinating dynamic in South Africa where race to people below the age of 20 isn't a factor, it's you're white, you're black, it's cool, it's all fine. It's a really nice thing to see (Beatty, 2006).

Beatty proposes that amongst people older than that, the apartheid government was probably one of the best propaganda machines in the entire world and is possibly responsible for ingraining any racial suspicion that might still exist.

But what you find amongst these younger kids, race isn't a factor and there is this fascination with each other's culture which is really cool. You find young white kids, fascinated by township culture, going in and having a look and hanging out there. You also find young black kids who have lived all their lives in suburbs as well, drawn in to the township, reminiscing from their parent's stories about the township as well. And there's this big kind of trend of what we call *kasi-nostalgia*. *Kasi* is the slang word for township and it is about this nostalgia

towards the township which is fascinating. I don't think you'd find that anywhere else in the world, where the suburbs are a little bit un-cool but the township's gritty and real (Beatty, 2006).

Instant Grass has just participated in a Global Youth Survey and the second most unique trait amongst South African youth is their lack of activism in the political arena.

It's not an apathy, it's just a lack of interest in politics. It's kind of JZ and Thabo you can do your thing, I'm not interested, I've had enough of politics, I'm *gatvol*, as long as I can wake up tomorrow morning and the rand hasn't gone to shit and I can still catch a taxi and buy my half tiger airtime it's ok, create the right environment for me to do my thing (Beatty, 2006).

An example of the spirit of entrepreneurship that is developing within South Africa is the 2010 World Cup Soccer which is coming up. It appears that more of the older South Africans are doubting whether or how things will actually happen. However the youth take is completely different to this older school view.

Youth at the moment are very me-focused and it's about my life and what I am going to do in my life, I don't care about my country, I'm not here to work to make it better, I'm here for me. So if they perceive that something will go wrong they'll go overseas, they can do anything in their minds which is a cool headspace to be in (Beatty, 2006).

South Africa is currently going through an incredible up-surge in the creative industry, from design to architecture, music, fashion, advertising and many creative elements. These are the areas that are developing in a major way and it is because of South Africa's diversity of cultures.

You see the young Afrikaners who have redefined themselves in such a big way which is so cool. They are kind of slightly parodying themselves on the side, but still saying we're Afrikaans and we're proud of it, we've got rock 'n roll bands and that's so cool. We call it the *Nuwe Afrikaner*, it's just this new breed of dudes who will make a full on mission to go to *Oppi Koppi*, go to *KKNK*, and just be Afrikaans, be South African and be proud. Young, white English-speaking dudes are still very caught up because they haven't allowed themselves to really

embrace South Africa. They are generally your passport holders with one foot overseas still thinking they've got an escape card and they aren't going to buy into this full-time. But the creative industry is such an amazing thing and that's keeping a lot of people here. People who aren't involved in creative industry, people who aspire to being global bankers etc sure they'll go overseas because the economics talk, you can earn a lot more money overseas (Beatty, 2006).

The South African youth displays a unique social development and this will be discussed further, in terms of the cell phone's prominence, in the case study of Instant Grass (see especially section 3.2.3 The South African youth and cell phones).

2.2.3 Cell phone culture and education

Cell phone culture is everywhere and has emerged alongside the sociology of the cell phone. With this gigantic wave of development for the cell phone beyond its original limits, there have been great cultural changes and challenges that have come along.

The cell phone is portrayed as glamorous, but also inexpensive. Many users decorate and personalize their phones, giving rise to folk art cottage industries. The cell phone has become a kind of art in itself, in which a user's choice of phone and decoration acts as a kind of personal statement (Katz in Rauch, 2005, p 2).

The cell phone culture that has bombarded the world has managed to permeate many crevices. This may seem bizarre yet the cell phone icon is popping up everywhere from candy containers, jewelry, toys and adornments even to wedding party favours. "In the end, the real impetus for cell-phone chic probably comes from teenagers, for whom having the right mobile phone is a prime dividing line between fashion innovators and hopeless dorks" (Kharif, 2002). Besides the cell phone being an icon of acceptance for teenagers, it has even made its way into traditional sectors. "A recent cover of the tony New Yorker magazine featured a Japanese woman wearing a traditional kimono and holding a fan made out of cell phones" (Kharif, 2002). This example seems hard to

imagine yet cell phone culture is emerging as a trend that permeates even the most traditional sectors.

In terms of cell phone art and culture, the cell phone can even be found in the performance arts world. The coined term is “grime” or “spitting” and it involves youth rapping to cell phone tunes out on the streets. This new cell phone assisted music scene started in London’s East End and is fast becoming one of the UK’s biggest musical innovations. “An amalgamation of UK Garage with a bit of drum ’n bass, a splash of punk and a touch of hip-hop thrown in for good measure, Grime manages to remain utterly and distinctly unique” (Collins, 2004).

This music genre was started by Dizzee Rascal. “On the street, cell phones enable impromptu rapping, or “spitting,” over music played through speaker phones” (Ringtonia, 2005). This performance art is distinctive of the type of technological innovators the youth are becoming. The music is downloaded from Internet sites and then added to the cell phone via Bluetooth or infrared technology. When a youth group gather around and all rap together over a cell phone simultaneously it is called “hype” or “hying it” (Ringtonia, 2005). For the youth this tool symbolizes independence, identity and the freedom to express themselves musically. “Cell phones are indispensable if inspiration should strike when the budding grime lyricist is out and about” (Biddlecombe, 2005). Although Grime is not prominent in South Africa, this is an international example of the versatility of the cell phone amongst the youth. It also displays how vital the cell phone is as a tool of expression and a cultural icon.

With youth making use of the cell phone as a signifier of their identity and dictating to them a sense of belonging, it is no wonder that cell phones cannot be left at home during school time. Thus the cell phone begins to permeate education as well. It is all about the chic-ness that a cell phone can exude, yet these accessories are changing cultural norms for youth especially at school. “The ubiquity of the cell phone has caused changes in certain cultural norms, as well” (Katz in Rauch, 2005). Katz makes direct reference here

to the “appropriateness of cell phone conversations” which is still a disputed issue and depends on the environment within which it takes place.

The cell phone has also had a mixed reception with regards to its use at school. According to Katz and Wang, “cell phones have transformed the micro-culture of classrooms and may shape the macro-culture of global youth” (Wright, 2005). “Due to “teledensity”, i.e. number of cell phones owned and used by students, the classroom microclimate has new rules of engagement” (Wright, 2005). Katz’s research on the cell phone shows:

According to Katz, only 4 percent of Rutgers students surveyed said it was “OK to talk on a phone in class” – good news for professors, it seemed. Now for the dark side: 41% found checking messages OK during class; 45% found exchanging text messages permissible and 33% of students found it within norms to play games on a cell phone during class (Wright, 2005, p 1).

In South Africa the policies for cell phones at school are still being put into place, but this is proving to be a challenge as many are still undecided about the future of this tool as part of education.

As the cell phone culture develops alongside the technological advances, it is a wonder that schools have survived such a powerful and interruptive mode of behaviour. Katz describes the “newly acceptable behaviors” as “territoriality and choreography” which involve people “privileging the distant other over co-present friends” by separating themselves from the group to have a cell phone conversation (Wright, 2005). According to the American School Board, a survey in 2003 indicates that 70% of Grades 6-12 and 61% of Grades 3-6 admitted to using a cell phone at school or during free time (Dean Pickett & Thomas, 2006).

Much cell phone use at school was disruptive. Other problem areas, included sending SMSes without having to look at the phone, documenting teacher behaviour and “cyber-bullying” which translates as using the cell phone to tease and bully peers or teachers. The youth are able to type SMSes without looking at the interface which becomes a

negative aspect as they send messages during school classes. These types of negative uses have obviously led to educators adopting the attitude that cell phones should be banned from school. However, not all people agree with the complete banning of cell phones at school as a solution to this problem.

“For now, most educators still see the computer and the cell phone as very different devices, with the tiny cell phone being a much more personal (and ubiquitous) accoutrement, especially among young people” (Prensky, 2005). In terms of the use of cell phones at school, Prensky proposes that it is time to incorporate it into the education system due to its impact on the youth.

Like all communication and computing devices, cell phones can be used to learn. So rather than fight the trend of kids coming to school carrying their own powerful learning devices – which they have already paid for – why not use the opportunity to their educational advantage? (Prensky, 2005, p 1).

This seems valid in theory, yet not all youths own cell phones and the management of its use at school is already proving difficult to control especially in developing countries.

Prensky (2005) advocates that cell phones will eventually replace textbooks due to their versatility with access to information and the Internet. Prensky sees the size of the cell phone screen as a positive constraint as it will ensure selected information being viewed instead of reams of unnecessary pages and urges using the cell phone camera for education.

In class, cell phones with cameras provide possible tools for scientific data collection, documentation, and visual journalism, allowing students to gather evidence, collect and classify images, and follow progressions over time (Prensky, 2005, p 4).

This would enable students to document the world as they experience it and perhaps even learn about activities in other classrooms around the world. Although this theory seems far-fetched in terms of traditional education, it is plausible as the cell phone is such an important means of youth communication. These types of uses could perhaps be incorporated into a technology or media subject. This would satisfy the youth's

connection towards cell phones, although it is doubtful that the cell phone could actually replace traditional modes of education altogether.

Yet the amount of research being done on cell-phone-based education is minimal. This is perhaps due to the more negative aspects that have sprung up, from cheating in exams to violence in schools.

Cell phones can be our students' interface to a variety of computing devices, just as they control their entertainment devices. Even if the future cell phone technology does not lend itself to every learning task, it will be suited to a wide range of tasks – and there is no reason not to take advantage of those capabilities (Prensky, 2005, p 5).

The problem in this is the denial from educational institutions about the cell phone's need to be incorporated in some manner into the school system.

Tucker (2005) agrees that it is time to take into consideration the tremendous challenge of reaching this gadget generation through updated learning strategies and that the cell phone's technology can enhance this instruction. In his article *Teaching the Millennial Generation* (2005), he identifies the youth group as “echo boomers”, “the millennium generation”, and “Gen M” and states that “teaching today's teens means acknowledging their unique technological, communicative abilities” (Tucker, 2005). Taking the cell phone's dominance in the lives of the youth today may mean accepting it as one of their educational devices.

Wood (2006) agrees with the demand for the cell phone as an educational tool for the youth.

Today's younger students are used to instant returns when they seek information. They have always had video games, downloaded music, cell phones, and instant messaging. These students do not learn the same way as the generations before them, according to Prensky; Gen Y brains are physiologically different than the brains of previous generations. These cognitive dissimilarities demand new approaches to education (Wood, 2006, p 24).

Wood proposes that a more collaborative approach to learning is what is needed. As the generation gap widens, it becomes important that these aspects are taken into account in order to fulfil the needs of the youth as the cell phone continues to permeate many other media and advertising areas. Yet the control and management of the cell phone in education seems too large and daunting for most educational institutions to tackle. Educators are, for now, trying to keep up with the daily influence and disruption of this tool at school. It seems unlikely that the cell phone would become incorporated in education merely because of its use by the youth. Research and policies would need to be conducted in order to fully take this idea to full realization. But what else do these new technologies mean on a larger scale?

2.2.4 New technologies and leapfrogging

Cell phone cameras are one of the many seductive technologies that has developed alongside the cell phone:

Cell phones with built-in cameras are the fastest-selling consumer technology product ever developed, and the Consumer Electronics Association says last year's totals of 6.3 million camera phones in the U.S. will double this year, and reach 20 million units in 2005 (Dyrli, 2004, p 63).

Cell phone cameras are becoming increasingly popular and are more available to the average cell phone owner. The youth are making good use of cell phone cameras and recently the world's first full-length movie shot entirely on cell phones was produced in South Africa. *SMS Sugar Man* was shot on Sony Ericsson W900i cell phones. Director Aryan Kaganof commented that, "things will never be the same again. From now onwards, all you'll need (to make a film) is a good idea, a cellphone, a laptop and you're off. It opens up a whole world of possibilities for African filmmakers..." (Fortune, 2006).

There are positive outcomes in using cell phones to shoot movies.

The cellphones allow you to do far more camera set-ups than if you were using bigger cameras; on this shoot, for example, we were able to get about four hours

of footage a day, compared with about an hour on a normal shoot. And that has all kinds of implications down the line ... (Fortune, 2006, p 2).

The film can be viewed on the website <http://www.smssugarman.com> “The film will be distributed on a variety of media, on Mobile TV, the Internet, theatrical, television and DVD platforms, offering the public maximum access in innovative ways” (ScreenAfrica.com, 2006).

Italian directors have followed suit on the entrepreneurial idea of the South Africans, as they recently shot an Italian feature-length documentary on a standard cell phone camera.

The technique underscores what has become a fixture in today’s globalised world: the use of amateur video and cell phone cameras to immortalize moments in people’s lives. Also, when news breaks, early footage is often shot with a cell phone, and, in the case of major events, authorities and news outlets have been known to call on amateurs to come forward with video (The Hindu, 2006, p 1).

Fortune brings up a pertinent point about this kind of innovative work. “...*SMS Sugar Man* is emblematic of what anthropologists refer to as the “leapfrog effect”. The “leapfrog effect” is when people in developing nations adopt new technology and use it in ways that allow them to overtake users in developed nations. To extract maximum value from leapfrogging, however you must be an early adopter (Fortune, 2006). This is exactly the point of this media dissertation’s proposal for Project M: to establish a platform whereby the youth can make use of their cell phones to create their own news channel and thus leapfrog into the new media future.

The “Leap-Frog Thesis” is defined as:

Rather than try to play “catch up” to other industrialized nations of the world, South Africa can “leap-frog” over them, to take a position of primacy, by recognizing what is really going on in the world now and capitalizing on the wealth of advantages it has, in terms of its demographics, national history, cultural heritage, and geographical location (Mehrtens & Milne, 1999, p 97).

This media dissertation accepts that this choice of “leap-frogging” is possible and especially evident already in various South African innovations.

The cellular communications development that has taken place in this country since its inception is clearly a mark of a gap for entrepreneurial business to capitalize on. In many ways, especially in terms of new business and media development, South Africa is showing a great embracing spirit towards small businesses and developments. Therefore creating a platform for youth communication via cell phone is another prominent way for South Africa to leap-frog over other countries. The fact that the youth have access to download cell phone movies assists with the development of such innovations. The cell phone youth adoption in South Africa is a primary example in itself of technological leapfrogging.

Leapfrogging is possible because, contrary to the usual pattern of technological diffusion, sometimes new media, or crucial components of new media operations, can be less expensive, and thus easier to adopt and disseminate, than older media (Levinson, 2004, p 128).

Further to this, Castells’ theory of the “network society” investigates the effect that new technology has in transforming society. To summarise Castells’ theory in relation to leapfrogging, the “far-reaching contemporary social transformation is rooted in the outcome of technological innovation, capitalist restructuring and the search for identity” (Mackay, Maples & Reynolds, 2001).

Besides cell phone cameras being used to make movies, one of the most recent South African youth crazes is called MXit (<http://www.MXit.co.za>) which allows patrons to send very cheap SMSes from an internet platform as a way to save on the usual cost of 35 cents per SMS. This service is just another indication of the youth’s need for a service to incorporate them. MXit is a South African invention offered online by creator Herman Heunis (chief executive). “On MXit it’s an inter-messaging system, so in other words you need to sign onto our servers. Once you’re signed on then you can send and receive messages” (Hogg, 2006). Although it is only available for text messages, it may

only be a matter of time before a server like MXit allows a more affordable option of sending video clips via MMS.

The rate of adoption of this system has been vast with 1.35m registered users that sign onto the system about 3m times each day (Hogg, 2006). It has spread mainly by word of mouth and the youth have been significant in popularizing this system. MXit doesn't charge users which is probably why it is so popular. The only charge is the operating system GPRS, but that is a minimal cost. The cost to send messages this way works out to around 1 or 2 cents per data message on old phones, and a fraction of a cent for a data message on new phones (Hogg, 2006). This is revolutionizing youth cell phone costs.

The great technological developments that are taking place, like moblogging and mobisodes, are also encouraging the youth's involvement in the media and advertising. The word moblog is a neologism, coined as a portmanteau of the two words "mobile" and "episode":

A mobile weblog, or moblog, consists of content posted to the Internet from a mobile or portable device, such as a cellular phone or PDA. Moblogs generally involve technology which allows publishing from a mobile device
(Wikipedia, 2006, p 1).

A mobisode is a broadcast television episode specially made for viewing on a mobile telephone screen and usually of short duration (from one to three minutes).

In South Africa, Rhodes University's New Media Lab's 'State of the Arts' web site is an example of moblogging in action. This web site was established to provide updated coverage of the National Arts Festival (Lowman, 2005). With moblogging, the web site "can be updated in real-time with images sent from the journalism students from the events via mobile phones, while the Web site can also be accessed by mobile phones on the simpler <http://fest.ru.ac.za/mobile> version" (Lowman, 2005).

These innovations, along with the growing power of citizen journalism will be viewed in more detail along with their affect on traditional media, like television, in the

investigative journalism section of this paper. Here it is vital to note that all these developments display a promising future for the life of the cell phone. Blogging, from moblogging to vlogging (video blogs), has also become a powerful innovation of new media. “The prevalence of Vlogs or video blogs are considered such a risk to television journalism that media industry chat rooms are jammed with discussions about them” (Edwards, 2005). These developments need to find ways of being combined with the traditional values of the mainstream media, in order to celebrate the youth’s creativity and ubiquity.

For South African youth the cell phone has become a symbol of freedom. It is not only a technological device, but a cultural tool of expression as well, from film-making to fashion and art, and also moblogging and now mobisodes for example through online communities like MySpace and Youtube. The cell phone is a signifier of identity for the youth and so it is undeniable that they would want to take it to school. Though cell phone use at school and in education still remains a difficult topic to understand, it is important to realize that it plays a role in the youth of today and will most likely have to be incorporated in some way into learning sooner than expected. Though new technologies can assist youth, and the idea of leapfrogging holds great promise for South Africa, it is also vital to find out more about the negative connotations of the cell phone and the youth at school.

2.2.5 Negative connotations beyond education

The cell phone inception in South Africa has affected the youth positively in many ways: they are well-informed, info-intelligent and educated through having a greater access through the cell phone. This makes the youth far more independent when compared to previous generations. The cell phone is the tool that has allowed this independence to develop. However, on a darker side the cell phone could be the cause of some very negative issues affecting the youth like pornography, the development or encouragement of bad language through texting, cell phone bullying, insults, crime, easy and instantaneous access to things like drugs and alcohol and the freedom to take part in

activities that are not monitored or controlled by parental supervision. How can this be controlled successfully?

Whilst the Film and Publication Board of South Africa currently researches public policy for Internet exposure to pornography amongst South African youth, they are ignoring the cell phone's dangers. For the purpose of looking at the potentially negative effects of youth exposure to cell phone technology, this media dissertation will use the following study as a guideline. In *The Rise of Third Generation Phones: The Implications for Child Protection*, Reid (2005, p 90) identifies the problem as follows:

3G mobile phone technology offer tremendous opportunities, but also many pitfalls, for the unwary user, especially children, tweenagers and teenagers. Young children are inquisitive by nature and readily adapt to new technology, while teenagers are sensitive to peer pressure to possess the latest gadget. Thus the trend of mobile phone use by children and young persons is likely to increase significantly. The dangers faced by children and young persons can be classified into three groups: content, contact and commerce. Thus, the 3G environment gives rise to 3C concerns.

Content relates to the issue of pornographic material as well as "information concerning illegal drugs, hate websites, violent images, abusive language, including bullying, harassment and intimidation, inappropriate chat-room conversations and spam" (Reid, 2005). Contact is the concern about the instantaneous manner in which information can be sent and received. This also leads to children giving personal details over to potentially dangerous situations like paedophiles. "Such activities can lead to identify theft or fraud, abduction, imprisonment, sexual abuse or blackmail" (ibid). The third concern is that of commercial dangers:

... certain commercial webpages and multimedia messages are potentially exploitative, preying upon the vulnerability and naiveté of children and young people and their susceptibility to directed and persuasive advertising. The greatest dangers apply in the cases of very young children who may be unable to distinguish between advertisements and the provision of information, and style-

conscious and impressionable teenagers who are inclined to succumb to peer pressure” (Reid, 2005, p 91).

The difficulty in controlling 3G technology is in that it is most profitable out of areas that do affect children if accessed i.e. “girls, games and gambling” (ibid). The solution to such threats from mobile technology is not straightforward. Rather, it must rely on a combination of enforcing policy from governments and education between parents and children on the dangers. Yet the monitoring of such policy is difficult to maintain. Maybe it is the price we pay for having access to a vast amount of information. As Reid puts it (2005), the

availability of a percentage of harmful content is the collective societal price democracies pay for freedom of expression (Reid, 2005, p 99).

But the rise of the cell phone camera and MMS has also cast a shadow on the positive implications of cellular technology.

This didactic dilemma is that the world that the cell phone gives access to, may also turn out to be harmful.

The accessibility and usability of 24-hour, always-on communication technology is accompanied by particular dangers for children. They face physical and virtual dangers from predatory and exploitative adults, invasion of their safety zone through intimidatory messaging and exposure to inappropriate, illegal or harmful multimedia content. These dangers are multifaceted and multifarious. The responses to these dangers must be proportionate, effective and integrated (Reid, 2005, p 106).

Are these dangers reason enough to switch off from a world of connection? Probably not and yet the anonymous nature of the cell phone turns out to be its potential flaw. Yet with a holistic approach to setting up protective measures, the positive nature of the cell phone still outweighs the negative connotations. These negative connotations will be further reviewed (see 4 The Cell Phone in investigative journalism).

From establishing the cell phone’s place amongst the youth in South Africa, and internationally, and looking at various repercussions that it has, this media dissertation

foregrounds the importance of the cell phone's role. It is now possible to look particularly at its role as a multi-media tool of communication and here two threads are identified: advertising and marketing; and investigative journalism.

In the following chapter, by looking at the cell phone's function in marketing and advertising, through the case study of Instant Grass, this media dissertation will research in depth the South African youth market. This will provide further insight into what the pros and cons are of the market and how to access it successfully. Marketers are using cell phone capacity to discover more about youth and their trends. In a multi-cultural society, this perhaps leads to marketers providing products that appeal to all youth, making South Africa a particularly interesting youth culture. Also marketers have found ways of using cell phones that educational authorities and others could learn from, by setting up a team of reporters and a central data base. In both cases then, Instant Grass and etv are examples of ways to explore the positive social networking side of cell phones amongst youth culture.

Chapter 3: The Cell Phone in marketing and advertising

3.1 Introduction

The cell phone's role as a value-added tool in marketing and advertising is emerging swiftly in South Africa. Whilst minimal academic research has been done on this topic, it is prevalent in advertising campaigns and media commentary. Industries are beginning to realise that they can no longer ignore the cell phone as a means to reach target audiences successfully. Yet for other more traditional and safe advertisers, there is still a great misunderstanding and mistrust of this new medium of multi-media communication. The cell phone is used to get messages to people and also used to get volunteered information from people. This type of model is something that others should be recognising and using constructively.

In the same sense that the cell phone threatens television but does not propose to eliminate it, the cell phone can propose a new form of marketing and advertising that traditional forms cannot compete with:

It is not my intention to convince you that mobile marketing is a new form of marketing in contrast to traditional forms of advertising. Rather, it is my view that the mobile phone is a device on which we find all the traditional forms of advertising wrapped into one package... print, image and voice. This factor sets up many new and innovative opportunities to provide the consumer with "better" brand experiences, and hopefully we will be able to explore this in future articles (Trisos, 2006, p 1).

Cell phones are interactive and therefore Trisos attempts to persuade marketers and advertisers that it has a direct link to audience response as opposed to traditional forms of media. The cell phone develops more of a two-way communication platform which is an incentive for marketers and advertisers. Yet the development of the cell phone in advertising and marketing does not come without problems. It is hampered greatly by technical issues as well as the rate of development of cell phone technology (ibid).

The advertising and marketing industry is not faced with a takeover by cell phone wielding teenagers, but marketers have to get with the programme and start to grapple with the issues in mobile marketing (Trisos, 2006, p 1).

What would be the form in which advertising or marketing takes place on a cell phone? Sanjabi (2004) advocates the growth of MMS in terms of mobile marketing.

MMS penetration is still relatively low, but is growing rapidly since MMS is the format which most camera phones send and receive pictures. IDC has predicted a 178% growth in MMS subscribers, bringing the US to a total of 68 million subscribers by 2007 (Sanjabi, 2004, p 23).

Currently it is through MMS penetration, that although not as popular as SMS yet, is gaining momentum in South Africa. It creates a valuable channel by which to communicate messages that are multi-media and personal.

The MMS portal supports a range of media and file formats, allowing for the delivery of long text messages (up to 4500 characters), images, sound, video and fully timed, multiple slides. The system allows customers to easily unsubscribe from receiving communications, ensuring that companies can meet marketing best practice as well as the requirements of the ECT Act (Bizcommunity, 2006, p 1).

It is a viable form of advertising and marketing as it is affordable, easy to use and allows for a response from the consumer.

Yet it could be questioned whether mobile advertising and marketing is becoming the predominant mode, especially amongst the youth market.

It is arguable that present day tier one media simply does not feature in the lives of the twentysomethings nor, by extension, to anyone who is younger. While the parallel universe that they occupy is one of convergence, there is a strong case to be made out that the mobile is the new tier one media that will be used by this group for all forms of communication in the foreseeable future (Trisos, 2006, p 1).

Is it then at all useful to market to a target group that is not consuming the traditional media anyway? It seems not, unless it is combined with the cell phone.

But mobile marketing inevitably requires some technical support in order to reach the marketing objective. The cell phone offers a range of multi-media ways to communicate messages: sound, text/SMS, moving images and the mixing of these media to create unique messages.

The mobile is personal (intimately personal), it is portable (it can be carted around wherever we go, even to the loo) and it is pedestrian (its use has become ubiquitous in our everyday lives). Eighty five percent of people do not leave home without their mobile phone (Trisos, 2006, p 1).

Yet how can advertising and marketing create valuable messages through such a small screen? The unique factor about cell phone advertising is that consumers will inevitably pass on messages that they connect with, thus adding value to the marketing. This is called viral marketing and has many advantages.

Viral marketing disrupts the outmoded conventional approach of traditional media and takes the consumer by surprise. You know when TV ads come on and so change channels. You know what a print ad looks like and turn the page. You don't know what a mobisode looks like when sent to your mobile (Rossi, 2006, p 1).

Making use of viral marketing results in major profits especially as consumers pass on the adverts to others and therefore the marketing becomes part a larger social network. "Mobisodes create contagious advertising messages (from TV commercials, short movies to print images) that get passed on, peer to peer, increasing brand awareness and or prompting a call to action" (Rossi, 2006). This results in a boom in sales and each time it is passed on, the value of the advertising message increases. Viral marketing also has the benefit of targeting its audience on a more "psychographical" level as the message will be sent out to prospective targets from primary receptors, which benefits the marketer and advertiser. Yet with a cell phone is it not just as easy to delete these messages? As the cell phone is a personal tool of communication perhaps there would be a resistance to

receiving advertisements on it? This is where it becomes important to research current markets in order to understand this process. For the purpose of this media dissertation, Instant Grass will be used as a case study in the advertising and marketing role of the cell phone and as a commercial authority on the sociology of youth cell phone usage in South Africa.

3.2 Case study: Instant Grass

The role of the cell phone and youth in the marketing and advertising industry is important as “traditional advertising is increasingly less credible to youth audiences” (Beatty, 2005). There is an even greater need then to use the world of media convergence to reach youth audiences. Targeting the youth sector now requires a lot more strategy and a more intimate understanding of the market being advertised.

In South Africa, Instant Grass is a company that makes use of the cell phone in order to conduct meaningful research about the fast-paced youth market. Instant Grass is an African Strategic Consultancy company that specializes in the youth market. The company originally began as a trend watching facility for the African youth market with their focus on South Africa, Nigeria and East Africa. “At Instant Grass we are interested in what is happening tomorrow with the youth of today” (Instant Grass website, 2005). The African youth market, as discussed earlier in terms of the Emerging Black Middle Class, is highly influential and thus the need for accessible market research is gained through observation. Instant Grass claims to access this youth market information as reliably as possible by observing the youth out there on the streets now through visual capturing of information.

This media dissertation is based on the youth culture of today and thus makes use of Instant Grass as a pioneer in the creative use of cell phones amongst youth as a case study for research about this sector, with implications for other uses and lessons for my Project M. Through interviews with Daniel Beatty, General Manager of Instant Grass, South Africa, and research on the company, valuable insight into what is happening with the South African youth of today emerged.

Instant Grass was initially a trend watching agency. They are a small company and decided to change their focus at the beginning of 2006. At the moment they are known as a Strategic Consultancy. “We base our Strategic Consulting on observational insight research and we do that through a network of 120 grasses around the country. Grasses are trend-ahead, trend-aware, eloquent, connected, net-workers” (Beatty, 2006). All grasses are interviewed by the company in order to get the job and then they research their social networks and peer groups for Instant Grass.

We manage the relationship with them so it’s honest and open feedback and from those insights that we get out of them, an insight can come from 1 person or 200 people, we then go to client with strategy, communications, marketing advice, all the way down to new product development, retail, design and so forth (Beatty, 2006).

Instant Grass now bears the official title of Youth Connectivity Agency as they connect marketers to the youth and discover the current youth trends.

3.2.1 Research methodology at Instant Grass

Beatty describes the youth market as “fickle” due to the way that music or styles are fashionable with them one day and are out of fashion just as quickly. Instant Grass watches the youth market as it is constantly in a state of flux. It is therefore important to keep a track of this very dynamic and unpredictable market. “The minute you commission conventional research, what we’ve found is that six months later you get the feedback and they present what is wrong with your product and then they walk away” (Beatty, 2006). This is the reason for conventional research no longer being effective, as it no longer provides accurate solutions or insights into the market.

The process involved in this alternative method of research is based on Instant Grass’ strategy and years of advertising experience amidst their group. But is the process as simple as it sounds? The infiltration of information from real people that are out there in the market can’t be an easy thing to manage.

You see what we’ve done is we’ve removed the research effect. If you corner a young person in a shopping mall on a Saturday morning with your clipboard, they

are going to probably lie to you or run away or just say no thanks because they are not interested. If you dangle a carrot that says free iPod if you answer this questionnaire, they are going to lie to you on the questionnaire as well. If you pull them into a focus group, you'll get focus groups that are derailed normally by one loud person leading discussion, the softly-spoken one won't be able to say anything, they are all there for the free biltong and peanuts anyway and they will tell you what you want to hear (Beatty, 2006).

Beatty (2006) claims that using a research method of actually talking to people and not analyzing or researching them from a distance assists in a greater understanding of the market. The client's brands are not mentioned in the research and it is more about an open, honest relationship. It is about interacting with the current market. Right now they are currently looking at blogging as probably the next best way to conduct research and they view this as the future of how they investigate the youth.

Instant Grass attempts to hit a gap in the market with this research. They can develop strategies for clients within two weeks to a month which means that the client is always up to date and in touch with the youth market. Clients subscribe to Instant Grass's service and receive a monthly update on what has happened that month, and then over and above that they also provide the client with areas they view as problematic and solutions on how to make it better. Clients are always aware of how to reach the various youth groups through this research.

Instant Grass will receive a brief from the client with the specifics on what information they are looking for with regards to the youth market. The following is a scenario of how the research would function in reality.

A great example was Levi-Strauss who came to us and said, look guys, we aren't selling products to young black girls, we think we've got a brand problem, we think we've got a problem with anti-America sentiment etc. Through about six or seven rounds of videoing girls shopping it just came out that the product didn't fit the market and the girls' unique figure. So we took that into developing a denim

which was called the “Eva” which launched in December and did really well for them. It was the first denim that they’ve launched for a local market, globally.

So that was a business challenge and we work best when we’re kind of answering business challenges (Beatty, 2006).

Instant Grass gets into the product market where conventional research methods can no longer reach as they are too vague and far-removed from the consumer. They make use of digital cameras and cell phone technology in order to complete this research.

All the grasses at Instant Grass are given digital cameras as it’s often easier to communicate in pictures than in words especially as a youngster out on the streets. Visual communication is also the way that this generation communicates, especially via visual branding. The grasses then take pictures and record their lives. Instant Grass boasts a library of over 20 000 pictures that have been gathered in their short existence period of three years. The pictures include various research projects conducted, from Zoo Lake parties to Matric farewell outfits and people’s bedrooms. This kind of inside information is not attainable to the average marketer and therefore proves to be valuable. For educational and journalistic uses, this way of researching could be equally as valuable, by setting up a central database of youth information.

The grasses are all between the age of 16 and 28. We define youth as that life stage. There are many ways to define youth. MTN currently defines it as not first-jobbing, not married, on your first car etc because you don’t have the worries of someone a little bit older. But that’s not really accurate. Unilever are targeting heavily on the 25 to 30 range because 16 to 24 aspire up and 30 to 50 aspire down to the 25 to 30 glory-days. We have hit a nice market there. We do work younger as well with kind of 13 to 20 year olds but that’s quite difficult in terms of paying kids for pictures and stuff like that, legality gets a bit tricky on that side (Beatty, 2006).

Legal issues have to be taken into consideration and this is especially evident in the use of cell phones.

Grasses generally have a 6 month life-span with the reason being that they can only really be intrigued, interested and operate at maximum velocity as a grass for about that amount of time. Then Instant Grass moves the current grasses onto a second network which is called Instant Seed. "Instant Seed is our way of sending out word of mouth messages. We give the product to guys to live with for 2 or 3 weeks, they share it amongst their friends, they feedback any information" (Beatty, 2006).

Instant Grass then creates the story behind the product with the client. For example with Lipton what they came up with was that it was the best drink for a hangover. Obviously that kind of story cannot be used directly in the client's above-the-line profile. Yet, what is interesting to note is that if the message is seeded out to the right person at the right time then it works really well. For example if students are out partying and stop by a shop at 2 am and hear the message as it would be more effective than handing out a simple flyer in a shopping mall. The grasses that have moved into seeding are then relied upon to send out strategic messages back into the youth market. This means that they have set up a dual-marketing function including receiving and sending out the right messages which is a very powerful research and marketing method.

An example of seeding amongst the cell phone youth market was done with the new Virgin Mobile. Instant Grass seeded out Virgin Mobile's web offering called "Scratch It" where you can download free ring tones and games. The seeding was completed in Johannesburg amongst youth in malls. Instant Grass received a lot of positive feedback on the campaign because of its tone and especially as there are no hidden promises. The youth market reacts well to genuine offers especially if they have a hint of coolness attached to them. This could further the spread of effective cell phone use.

3.2.2 The cell phone used for research

Instant Grass stores the cell phone data in a database, something which has great promise for their business. Cell phone data could be transmitted directly to a blog to store up to date information for clients.

We need to create an efficient forum for cell phones to be able to interact straight into a database, so if they're sending pictures in or MMSes as well, we need to do that. Cell phones in South Africa have an incredible rate of adoption. The fact is it's kind of like a "holy grail" though because no one's quite cracked it (Beatty, 2006).

Instant Grass has also been looking at cellular communities like MXit which offers drastically reduced prices for SMSes. Yet it seems that no one has quite mastered that business model either and so there is definitely a gap there. "Loads of the guys are using MX-it, that's kind of one of the favourites at the moment where you set-up your community and then it costs 1 cent per SMS between your community and chat because it goes through GPRS" (Beatty, 2006). MXit is downloaded onto a cell phone and kept there for use. Instant Grass is looking to capitalize on the cell phone prominence amongst youth and are planning to set-up a cell phone blog internally in order to receive information directly from their grasses. This has possibilities for educational projects and investigative journalism as well.

Instant Grass can access information instantaneously, picking up trends as they happen from a party or any function or directly off the street.

For us as well cell phones are the best way to access the township market. Lots of people do have them. One of the barriers to becoming a grass is that you have to be able to use a computer and you have to be Internet savvy and most people are and they make the mission but it's a huge kind of technological barrier (Beatty, 2006).

The use of cell phones, however, is providing youth with Internet access as well as other media tools and that is why the use of cell phones is particularly perfect in South Africa as it makes the township accessible for information too.

Instant Grass are able to send messages back into the market via the Instant Seed process. Hot Housing is the process where they create the message for the client about the brand they are working with according to the current strategy out on the streets. "We realize

that if you let the market create their own message about your product then it will stick” (Beatty, 2006). Hot Housing takes place before the Seeding begins.

Instant Grass has become well-recognized by their approach of gathering information. They have found different ways of getting connected to people. Yet they aren’t specifically a research agency nor an advertising agency, but they overlap into these areas. They therefore perform a multi-tasking function in their work. But this type of instant researching is not entirely new to advertising and marketing industries.

Trend spotting on an international level is also aiming to figure out the global youth culture in a similar way to Instant Grass. Kathleen Gasperini, senior vice president of Label Networks (who include Apple Computer, Verizon Wireless, Pepsi, Vans, Levi Straus, Burton Snowboards among their clients) explains the company’s methodology in researching the youth.

Our methodology is unique in that we are mobile and go into their environments, i.e. shopping locations, cafes, malls, streets, sporting areas, and music festivals, we talk with young people in face-to-face interviews. We created proprietary wireless research tools and methodologies that allow us to be mobile and go into such locations (Gasperini, 2006, p 1).

This is similar to Instant Grass’s method of field research amongst the youth and a sense of trust is developed between the youth and the researchers.

3.2.3 The South African youth and cell phones

The South African youth market is very savvy and they know how to get around things. “We tell our clients as well, 14 is the new 21, everything that we did by the age of 21 in terms of sex, drink, rock ’n roll, buying things, they’ve done by 14 and it’s getting younger all the time which is quite scary” (Beatty, 2006). In terms of cell phones Instant Grass did a project for Vodacom recently where they had to research the age group 9 to 15 years. The results were shocking to say the least. “One 9 year old kid told us that if his cell phone got lost he would probably commit suicide because he would lose his entire social network and he said his life would go down the tubes” (Beatty, 2006). This

is further proof of the massive social role that cell phones play in the lives of South African youth today.

Instant Grass also works in depth with cell phone clients like Nashua Mobile, Virgin Mobile, MTN, who subscribe to them for their various needs. “They use us differently to find out what the landscape is, what’s coming up that they can capitalize on. MTN have just done their segmentation model, they want us to flesh it out, show them exactly what their consumers are looking for” (Beatty, 2006).

What we’ve found from the youth specifically is there’s kind of a big mistrust. Cell phone companies have done themselves quite a disservice because they’ve got a reputation for ripping people off, charging too much and also promising more than they deliver. The cell phone market isn’t very well educated on the offerings (Beatty, 2006).

Instant Grass is currently working with Nashua Mobile and they are finding a resistance from the youth market to move to Nashua when they can just remain with MTN or Vodacom. This is perhaps due to the lack of interest the youth have about what cell phone companies have to offer. “With the youth we always say that air time is oxygen” (Beatty, 2006). A majority of the South African youth are on pay-as-you-go with cell phones and not contracts. Beatty suggests that cell phone service providers should recognize the importance of creating the perfect young person’s contract.

The perfect youth cell phone offering doesn’t seem to exist. Parents give their children air time as a part of their pocket money per month and the children have to manage it and probably work in order to get more air time. That is why products like MXit speak so much to the youth as they offer cheaper SMSes which are vital for the young person’s cell phone survival. The youth will even pick up on the free SMSes offered from the web. For example:

... in terms of the youth offering they loved Cell C until they realized that Cell C wasn’t all that they expected in terms of network and bad reception and they were kind of well I’ll just go back to Vodacom and swing it back across and now it’s

un-cool to have an 084- number which is kind of perilous territory for Cell C to be in (Beatty, 2006).

This indicates the youth's influence on a product's market which can have dangerous repercussions. This is also evident with the fact that MXit is not available directly on Cell C numbers which has added to its "un-coolness" as a service provider amongst the youth.

Beatty also notes that it will be interesting to watch how the youth will react to Virgin Mobile once it has taken off as already there has been a vast amount of positive feedback with a lot of interest.

I think Virgin might have missed a trick a little bit in terms of pricing, they could've come in and slashed prices if they've wanted to. But as it is through not having a contract, that's what these guys are, I mean spontaneous planning is a huge thing. You don't know what you're doing tonight, let alone Friday night, let alone in two years time, so that's why they all avoid contracts in the first place (Beatty, 2006).

The youth's unpredictability is a big market concern.

The South African market is developing and thus it has a great deal of opportunities for entrepreneurship and creativity. Instant Grass is a living, successful example of this type of self-made company. With new business and creative work taking off it is possible to do exactly what you envision in South Africa.

You've also got a beautiful gap in South Africa. A friend of mine is a designer and he's got a group of designers together and all their clients are in Europe and they work from Stellenbosch because we're on the same timeline and that's a beautiful gap as well is that the global market because the rand, if the rand settles at about 7.50 you can live a very comfortable life and really live the life in South Africa servicing an international client (Beatty, 2006).

South Africa is being utilised by many international companies. Although South Africa is a developing market, many white South Africans were raised in the equivalent of the developed worlds due to apartheid. "But South Africa's a developing country and you

get a whole bunch of new South Africans who would be as comfortable in India, China, Brazil, South Africa where the energy is and that becomes almost an addiction to that energy” (Beatty, 2006). It is precisely this energy in the developing countries that is giving rise to creative industries. Cellular advertising is, however, definitely in need of some of this creative energy to drive it more towards the youth market.

According to Beatty, cellular marketing is the “holy grail” because it allows constant contact with the recipient, but advertising on cell phones has yet to take off purely because it has a great annoyance factor attached to it and youth simply do not subscribe to that. Marketers shoot themselves in the foot when they presume that people want to know about their brands. The youth generation especially does not care or want to know about a brand unless it is important to them.

I don’t care what milk I buy, and I know you don’t either, you’ll go and you’ll look at the dates and you’ll pick one up, you don’t care what Clover’s doing really, it doesn’t matter, you don’t really bother with that. It depends around the interest of the purchase so if you can advertise to people when they’re interested in making the purchase then they’re interested (Beatty, 2006).

Beatty recognizes that the most successful youth marketers in South Africa are the ones that work through-the-line with a variety of access to the youth.

A brand like Millers is the icon of this because they’ve got web presence to the point where you can download an icon onto your desktop so that when you connect to the Internet it uploads itself and you’ve got the latest news from South Africa on your desktop, you can read about all fashion cool things, Millers events, to the ambassadors who will meet you when you’re out, to their events that you get invited to, to their above the line to everything. It’s all one consistent message but a thousand touch points which really interests young culture, it’s kind of I will choose when I want to interact with you but you’ve got to keep talking to me all the time (Beatty, 2006).

Amongst the youth generation in South Africa, there is a growing attitude of the consumer dictating to the advertiser or marketer what they need or want. Instant Grass has coined a term for this and calls it the “prosumer” because they proactively consume.

Cell phones, the web, every purchase all the way down to your denims is probably something you'll look for on the web, you'll see how much you can get them for overseas, what range Levi's have in San Fran, what range Diesel has before you go to the actual store so you know what you're looking for before you walk in. Stores shoot themselves in the foot because they've generally got some fool who's getting paid R10 an hour standing behind the counter who thinks because he's working at Diesel he can look at you aggressively which is really annoying. So the youth experience this bad store service and prefer to do their shopping by cell phone now. So if you're trying on your Levi's you can take a photo of your ass, send it to your friend, 'Does my bum look big in these?' and in two seconds they get a report back like 'Actually Ja' or 'Really No'! It's sped everything up so you've got this kind of prosumer who is really taking control of the transaction (Beatty, 2006).

Technologically South Africa may be behind in terms of broadband Internet access yet Beatty believes we may even skip the Internet boom due to a lack of development in the townships, and rather go straight to the cell phone boom due to simple and affordable accessibility. Other first world countries experienced an Internet boom because they could afford it, yet in South Africa this has not been the same privilege for most. "South Africans, because it's been so expensive, we don't use the Internet for recreation. However, when cell phones make it cheap enough it will come to that. So you are going to skip this generation of people who have been looking for wireless, go straight to cellular interaction on the net" (Beatty, 2006). Already the reduced cost in SMSes via the MXit platform has started to make the cell phone more innovative than the Internet.

The big challenge though will be for cellular networks to be able to capitalize on that and then also for people to understand the broad range of functions on their phones.

Vodacom has recently launched a television advert about their VodaWorld shops where you can learn more about cellular functioning. The youth have a greater advantage with cell phones as they are technologically intelligent as opposed to the older generation.

With the speed with which technology advances, it is imperative to keep up to date with new developments or alternatively be lost.

That was kind of the other huge trend that's going on with that prosumer, internationally especially, brands involving people in their advertising and in making adverts which is literally kind of where it's all going to go to because the consumers once they feature in advertising and product development as well then you've already bought a bit of their loyalty. Loyalty's a myth, it doesn't exist and through involving them in the development and the creation of something you've really built something that's important (Beatty, 2006).

For example when approached by Levi's about sending out a viral advert they had created and enquiring how many people to send it to, it all depended on the quality of the advert. Levi's thought it was a good advert, yet, as Beatty sums up, it only matters what the market thinks of the advert otherwise it will go nowhere. "It's about creating something that is really, really sticky. But where you involve people in creating a message they'll make sure that it gets sent further and wider" (Beatty, 2006). As Beatty reiterates, traditional advertising is fast becoming a thing of the past when it comes to the youth.

Whether it is New Product Development sampling or Concept Testing (in a 24 hour turn around time) for advertising agencies that are in a bit of trouble, Instant Grass is foregrounding research based around the South African youth. Creating a youth platform via cell phone access, whether for news or views or even for a research company like Instant Grass, is definitely a valuable investment. This case study is invaluable as it provides research based on sound information from the youth market group right now.

Observational research appears to be a viable way to reach this difficult to pin down, ever changing youth market, especially in South Africa townships. The youth market is a "fickle", dynamic, powerful market which is beginning to dictate messages to brands instead of the other way round. Instant Grass's method of gathering market research about the youth, by the youth grasses, is an excellent, non-conventional research method which provides results. This is definitely the way of future market research through

visual capturing with cameras on cell phones. The South African youth is attached to cell phones as much as their international counterparts, if not more, due to the symbolism and freedom that the cell phone has come to mean to them. This also makes platform-ing youth ideas or news an extremely valid thing to do.

The way we think about brands is old. Modern people have evolved beyond the passive consumerism of the mass media age. Young consumers are not defined by the mass media marketing of their parents – they are defined by their experience of complex networks, from their sophisticated mastery of modern technology to their heightened levels of awareness through global media. In this connected age, the small internet website is as powerful as the massive global media company. Entire nations are swayed by small groups and new ideas spread around the world like wildfire (Unilever Wildfire Presentation, 2006).

We need to harness the creative energy of the identified prosumer's attitudes in any media product or activity. Instant Grass therefore assists my development of a creative platform for youth stories.

3.3 Advertising exercise

This media dissertation put the idea of the youth being in charge of creating an advertising message to the test by taking some of the findings of Instant Grass and putting them to work in a public service message. A class exercise was developed in order to understand current youth creativity. Although the exercise was not designed as a research experiment, it provided a means to investigate this market closely. Through the following exercise, interesting and problematic results were found with the outcome.

In proposing a platform whereby the youth participate in media or advertising, it is important to put this theory to the test. This media dissertation conducted an exercise with the target youth market in order to see if it was possible and also viable for them to be a part of creating their own advertisements, and especially to determine if the role of the cell phone amongst the youth could be a multi-media tool of empowerment in advertising and marketing.

A group of 24 second year students, studying Film and Media at the University of Cape Town, were used for this exercise. The objective of the exercise formed a part of their group project which they had to fulfil for an advertising seminar. The group project outline was:

Your group project must focus on working together to place a product on TV. During class you will learn to brainstorm ideas, choose your product and work out your execution. You will be required to storyboard your advert before producing it. The advert may either be shot on a cell phone or with a digital camera. It may not be longer than one minute. Work together and make magic. The top three adverts will present their final products at an advertising agency (Griffiths, 2006, p 2).

The students were randomly put into groups consisting of five students each, and one group consisting of four students. The product that was selected to be advertised was a public service announcement with the main aim of the message being “Don’t Drink and Drive”. This was the only stipulation of the intended advert. Students were allowed to bring this message across in whatever manner they thought possible through the storyboard and then the final advert. The target audience for the advert was the South African youth, in particular UCT students with cars. The students received seminar sessions which focused on group brainstorming, storyboarding, television advertising, and presentation skills. In terms of the production of the adverts technologically, the students were required to edit and produce them to the best of their ability and without assistance.

The exercise allowed this group to produce their own messages and therefore emphasized that it was a message that they would be open and interested to view themselves. The group created an advert for the target market that they form part of. By using cell phone cameras or digital cameras, this further extended the exercise’s validity. The aim of the exercise was to be able to MMS the messages to their peers and therefore have direct contact with their target market. The outcome discovered the pros and cons of the idea

of transmitting messages via cell phone contact. The outcome also gave the youth a mini platform whereby to test their abilities.

The adverts had to fulfil certain objectives as follows:

1. Target market: UCT students with cars
2. The message must be strongly conveyed to the desired audience
3. Technically the production, shots and editing must be good
4. Presentation of the advert must be prepared

The students who participated in this exercise reported back that they thoroughly enjoyed having the opportunity to create a message of their own. Each group was marked according the different objectives above and the marks reflected a successful endeavour. The adverts can be viewed on the attached DVD for reference.

The adverts produced by the various groups displayed innovative and fresh ideas about their target market. Each advert had a unique narrative and the technical production of most of the adverts was excellent. The exercise was a successful task as the youth group enjoyed being part of a message they were receiving. The youth group took on the role of “prosumer” as identified by Beatty (2006), by creating their own messages. It was also interesting to see their capabilities in terms of their technological knowledge as they were not assisted with the production of the adverts. Overall, being a generation that is so intelligently connected to the digital age, made it possible for the technical production elements of the adverts to work successfully.

Instant Grass was extremely interested in this exercise as they deal with the youth as a target market. This exercise fits in directly with Instant Grass’s idea of the prosumer. Although some of the adverts created seemed to have quite an immature approach to them, it was vital to remember that these students had no experience whatsoever in this line of marketing. Therefore their final products were pioneering attempts at this new development in marketing and advertising. The point that was proved is that it is possible for the public, the youth, to create their own media messages. These students

are 'prosumers' in the fact that they are involved in the advertising of a social responsibility message "Don't Drink and Drive".

As Beatty (2006) proposes, having consumers involved in developing their own advertising is an innovative jump as it buys their loyalty for the message. This type of advertising exhibits immense power as it works through word of mouth and by 'viral' spreading. Therefore, if a message is deemed 'cool' by the group creating it and sending it out, especially over cell phone, then it will have the capacity to travel like wildfire. Where people or the public are involved in creating the message, this makes sure that the message will go even further than a dictating advertising agency that is not aware of their market to its full capacity.

The outcome of the adverts created by the youth consisted of valuable and well produced messages in terms of the target market. However, it was not viable in terms of sending the adverts out via MMS. Most of the adverts were shot on digital cameras and were too big to send out via cell phones and would have cost too much. The main issues that affect MMS messages are the cost and size of the message being sent. Besides this technical drawback, the exercise group lacked confidence in their messages to 'brag' or 'sell' them to fellow peers. However if the messages were affiliated with an established media organization this would resolve the issue of gate-keeping the stories and giving the youth confidence in their messages. If the messages were also supported by an educational facility then they might have the possibility of allowing learners in schools with sophisticated equipment to complete different kinds of projects.

In order to improve on the class exercise, future research would need to look at the technical side of transmitting MMS messages. A University is a sound platform from which to produce products that could be useful as cell phone technology develops. Students have the creative capacity to create messages for their own target market as they have a closer connection with what their peers' schemas consist of, in comparison to marketers and advertisers. A further suggestion could be for students to approach

sponsors connected to the message being made, in order to send the MMSes out free of charge or on behalf of the sponsor.

The exercise, despite some shortfalls, showed that students were capable, like the “grasses” from Instant Grass, of investigating issues among their peers and finding ways of conveying them effectively, and of producing a product that could, with some guidance, have led to effective targeting of young drivers. This exercise could be adapted to schools to deal with issues like bullying, drug usage, cultural diversity, or other complex issues could be dramatised and messages produced. Given the prevalence of cell phones in schools without sophisticated film or editing equipment, this could be an example of technological leapfrogging.

The advertising exercise proved that the youth do have the ability and creativity to create messages for their market. This media dissertation now moves on to the other side of the spectrum, investigative journalism, to establish the role of the cell phone as a media tool for the youth.

Chapter 4: The Cell Phone in investigative journalism

4.1 Introduction

In the next stage of investigation, I explored the role of the cell phone as a potential media tool for investigative journalism. To do this efficiently, I spent time at etv's Third Degree for research purposes. In many ways, the cell phone camera capturing stories raises similar concerns to the use of the spy camera in investigative stories. What are the parameters in investigative journalism and how is the transfer of news gathering by the public already being done?

Investigative journalism is "when news reporters try to find information which is of public interest but which someone might be keeping hidden" (Nel, 2001). Furthermore, Gaines (1998) puts forward that "investigative reporting is a very powerful area of print and broadcast journalism". Gaines (1998, p 1) discusses the main objectives of investigative reporting as the following:

- It produces the story that would not have been revealed without the enterprise of the reporter.
- It provides the reader with a story of public importance that had to be pieced together from diverse and often obscure sources.
- It reveals a story that may be contrary to the version announced by government or business officials who might have tried to conceal the truth.
- It results in a story that usually is displayed prominently in a newspaper or that leads the nightly TV newscast.

Investigative journalism involves uncovering a story that would not otherwise have been exposed. "Good investigative reports clearly show what evidence they have, and ensure that different and independent sources corroborate the important elements of the story" (Krüger, 2005). These stories have to be of importance to the public and have to uncover some element of truth not known. Finally, the stories must be broadcast to the public.

South Africa has rich soil for investigative journalism due to the establishment of a democracy in 1994. Although there are also strong provisions made for privacy and restrictions with regards to what can be shown to and of children. The Bill of Rights in the new Constitution explains the freedom of expression that is entrenched. “Freedom of expression” is described as follows in the Bill of Rights:

16. (1) Everyone has the right to freedom of expression, which includes

- a. freedom of the press and other media;
- b. freedom to receive or impart information or ideas;
- c. freedom of artistic creativity; and
- d. academic freedom and freedom of scientific research.

(2) The right in subsection (1) does not extend to

- a. propaganda for war;
- b. incitement of imminent violence; or
- c. advocacy of hatred that is based on race, ethnicity, gender or religion, and that constitutes incitement to cause harm.

(Chapter 2, Bill of Rights)

The fact that the press has the liberty (within these boundaries) to be a ‘free’ press means that there is a large emphasis placed on an expression of issues that would otherwise remain under cover. Through the South African freedom of expression entrenchment, the press and other media are able to express their views freely yet still in a controlled atmosphere. The ability for also receiving or imparting information and ideas, and the freedom for artistic creativity lends itself strongly to the development of a youth news platform.

The idea to platform youth stories or news is unique in itself, yet there are already many media houses that already incorporate citizen journalism into their programming. Carte Blanche is the investigative journalism programme for M-NET which has set up a

pathway for the public to be involved in stories by setting up the 'scout' idea. The Carte Blanche website advertises the 'scout' idea as follows:

Be a Carte Blanche Scout

You can help us report on events as they happen by being our eyes and ears on the streets. You may witness a crime or an incredible sighting, you may encounter an unusual natural phenomenon or an inspirational image of some sort. If you have an MMS enabled cellphone, you can capture video and still images of noteworthy events or phenomena and email them to us (Carte Blanche website, 2006).

It could be argued that Carte Blanche is the first to get the public to produce parts of their stories and investigations for them, doing in journalism what the 'grasses' do in marketing. But they were not the first to enlist the public – as already the idea of citizen journalism has taken off in South Africa with the establishment of <http://www.reporter.co.za> which is a website that only publishes citizen journalism. "Citizen journalism, enabled by an explosion of free publishing tools, is influencing traditional media and giving an independent voice for points of view previously disenfranchised by the corporate media" (Good, 2006). The public do play a part in news gathering today and especially with the cell phone's technological capabilities. "Using camera cell phones and digital cameras, eyewitnesses can easily send their photographs to news outlets or friends, who then pass them along to others who might publish them on the Web or in blogs" (Outing, 2005). The truth is that this idea of 'scout' is yet another example of the fact that the public have a direct connection with information and through the cell phone camera, the average person is now able to capture information instantaneously and often before journalists. This is transforming the act of reporting itself. 'Scout' works by people sending their MMSes to an email address at Carte Blanche instead of to a cell phone number.

For example, Carte Blanche has recently broadcast two stories which have a powerful relevance to this media dissertation. The first story is *Violence in schools* (23 July 2006).

This story focuses on the growing violence in schools in South Africa which has resulted in tragic consequences for those involved, including death. The interesting fact about this story is that actual camera footage of one of the fights was captured by one of the scholars who witnessed the fight. This footage was used in the broadcast of the story and reflects the power of the cell phone camera to capture information directly as it happens. This has revolutionary consequences for the youth to put forward issues that affect them directly yet the youth often do not have the ability to make their issues public knowledge.

The second story is *Smut on small screens* (30 July 2006). This story is also a testament to the importance of the cell phone's role in the youth today. "The world's youngest generation, generation Y, have been called the 'thumb tribe' because of their ability to SMS at lightning speeds" (Carte Blanche website, 2006). The story proposes that this generation is far more socially, politically and economically aware than any previous generation. It raises the question though of what protection is available to such a vast and open mode of communication especially with regards to problems like Internet pornography.

"Parents regard cell phones as a form of security; a means to stay in touch with their offspring. But to children, cell phones mean freedom – a gateway to a world beyond parental control" (Carte Blanche website, 2006). The freedom that the cell phone provides to youth is experienced currently through MXit which ranges from SMS chat rooms to virtual shopping, virtual nightclubs and communities. MXit is accessed through the Internet (<http://www.MXit.co.za>) and then downloaded onto a cell phone. "MXit is the only South African cell phone instant messaging service, with approximately 855 000 users" (Carte Blanche website, 2006).

Herman Heunis (creator of MXit) claims that between 50 to 70 million messages are sent through the system per day. Messages cost around two cents for a 160 character message. Yet these platforms can be unsafe territory for the youth and parents cutting their children off from the technology is not necessarily the answer either. But the increasing proliferation of cell phone pornography is a great worry for adults. The

problem is twofold: paedophiles gaining access to such vulnerable sites, and youth being able to be exposed to pornography from strangers. On the MXit website there is an article about security which addresses both youth and parents. This security article clearly warns those using the system to be careful and to keep all personal information private. With regards to paedophiles, the following point is made.

5. Keep your online relationships ONLINE! Even if you think you know your contacts well enough, we still strongly advise that you DO NOT meet offline with strangers. Paedophiles and other offenders are clever; they sometimes spend months gaining their victim's trust, before asking to meet with them (MXit website, 2006, p 1).

Although there is this security advice, perhaps it is not read by most users. This further indicates that there is a definite need for a system in place that can monitor cell phone material that is downloaded.

Unfortunately the same advances in computers and telecommunications, that allow us to reach out to new sources of knowledge and cultural experience, also leave us vulnerable to exploitation and harm by offenders. This is a function of the human social dynamic and not that of the underlying technology (MXit website, 2006, p 1).

Before looking at the investigative nature of the cell phone with reference to my work experience completed with etv's 3rd Degree, it is imperative to delve into the current effect of citizen journalism on the media.

4.2 Citizen journalism

There are many developments that are taking place technologically and this affects the current media. The threat for current media is that a new medium is developing due to these technological advancements. Through looking at investigative journalism in television, the dominant role that the cell phone could play becomes apparent. In South Africa, television is already moving towards accepting new innovations. Recently Mark

Gillman from 5fm has pioneered such an example by debuting his Gilly TV which is a live simulcast interactive program on DStv channel Go and 5FM. Gilly TV is the “transition of 5FM’s sound into television pictures” (Bizcommunity, 2006). This programme includes live interaction through SMS with its audience. By noting this example, it highlights further gaps for new developments encouraging the cell phone’s place within television.

The argument that Chris Hitchings (sales director of Oracle Airtime Sales) puts forward, however, is that technology is tending to drive consumer trends.

Consumer trends are changing. Today’s viewer wants instant gratification. TV as a medium has moved away from a one-to-many towards a one-to-one communication. Viewers can pick up media on individual devices, cellphones, iPods and PVR to go (Bizcommunity, 2006, p 1).

With the introduction of HDTV (High Definition TV) in South Africa, as well as the PVR (Personal Video Recorder), television viewing on cell phones and live news broadcast updates on cell phones with 3G, this needs to be taken into consideration as consumers are more involved in dictating content nowadays.

Although media gurus are putting forward their view, it is valuable to get a vivid picture of what is happening in the media now. Mark Jakins (out-going CEO of SABC Commercial Enterprises) is still confident that mainstream media has a stronghold in South Africa for now. Although main media is dominating the market, it is only a matter of time until new technology will affect it directly. Jakins points out the following issues which relate to content amongst the youth:

- Youth viewership is becoming more selective and exigent.
- TV offerings to this market are increasingly competitive.
- TV viewing environments are ever-changing.
- Opinions on the influence of TV on children are mounting in diversity.
- The repertoire competing with kids’ TV is expanding.

(Bizcommunity, 2006, p 1)

Although media proliferation is becoming a reality in SA, the average child is spending more time watching TV. So what are consumers giving up then? I don't want to belittle the hype around new media, but terrestrial media is still outperforming digital, even at the top end of the market. And internationally, the largest audiences are still delivered by broadcast operators (Bizcommunity, 2006). How long this will last is questionable though with the increasing cell phone innovations. Already this is apparent in moblogging and mobisodes, especially with the youth as dealt with in the earlier leapfrogging chapter. Stanley Edwards (Platypus Productions – video content production specialists) claims that “convergent technologies are one of the few ways to reach the elusive yet powerful 16 – 24 year olds” (Bizcommunity, 2005).

Out of the development of all this new technology, the idea of citizen journalism is a steadily growing concept which has been further enabled due to this advancement in technology. With cell phone cameras being so popular and accessible to almost anyone, your average person on the street can capture breaking news before journalists do. “The use of mobile reporting in mainstream news is a sign of the changing relationship between journalists and non-journalists, and is proving a powerful way to report events before TV cameras arrive” (Twist, 2005). This was certainly true with the main footage of the London bomb attacks coming immediately from mobile phones as well as the Iraqi (March 2003) war footage.

The idea of the ‘cellphonic journalist’ has been most prominent in recent wars where actual footage was sent from war zones. “In retrospect, the cellphone was an ideal instrument for reportage of war – if it hadn't been invented and developed already, it might have been, just for that purpose. The cellphone is small, self-contained, live, and interactive” (Levinson, 2004). The cell phone as used in reporting war directly as it unfolds has proved useful for embedded and unembedded journalists. But it is not only available to journalists, and thus a much wider view of instantaneous news from the public is becoming available.

This “pocket journalism” provides what is called “open source news” (citizen journalism) and is made possible through 3G phones that can shoot video clips, some even of broadcast quality with the latest cell phones on the market. “News organizations in Japan were the first to recognize the power of mobiles, and often turn to such electronic newsgathering to get the first images” (Twist, 2005). This is further proof of the direct relationship forming between cell phone cameras and newsgathering, and the effectiveness of its immediacy.

Although it may not turn out to be the only technical tool needed for gathering news, it is proving to be highly effective and reliable in terms of immediate access and transfer of information as it occurs. Cell phones only require a functioning network to transfer images, whereas TV cameras need much more complex feed links as the images are high-quality. “Mobiles are also proving crucial investigative tools too” (Twist, 2005). As with the spy camera used in investigative journalism, the cell phone has similar abilities to capture secret recordings and major events as they unfold.

Cell phone cameras are such a major part of today’s society that perhaps they will play an even larger role in the reporter’s daily life. At the First International Moblogging Conference (Tokyo, 5 July 2003) the future of mobile publishing was discussed. 21st century journalism is definitely under review due to the invention of the cell phone camera. “Publishing to the Web from your cell phone or other mobile device – moblogging – is all the rage with Tokyo’s digerati, and many believe these new mobile publishing tools will eventually bring big changes to journalism and other industries” (Rutledge, 2003). For South Africa, this poses a greater democratization of media. “The ultimate democratization of the media will not be about technological advances; rather, it will entail upholding old-fashioned standards to earn viewers’ trust” (Rheingold, 2003). Yet these technological tools are shaping, assisting and creating journalism which is developing into many new styles.

In his book *Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution*, Rheingold predicts the evolving street culture of blogging. Yet Rheingold suggests that there is still an indecisiveness

about whether this new technology is a fad or whether it will become a powerful new way for gathering news. He states: “Informed action in the near future could influence the way this nascent media culture develops – or fails to develop – for decades to come” (Rheingold, 2003).

An important issue though brought up by Rheingold is the fact that perhaps the cell phone as a tool should not be mistaken with the task of the journalist that still lies at hand. Although the tool is at hand to make the media more democratized, the fact that journalism requires specifics cannot be underestimated.

Journalism, if it is to deserve the name, is not about the quality of the camera, but about the journalist’s intuition, integrity, courage, inquisitiveness, analytic and expressive capabilities, and about all, the trust the journalist has earned among readers (Rheingold, 2003, p 3).

One of the big issues that arose is this exact issue of trust, especially with the youth creating their own stories:

Citizen journalism is potentially devoid of any form of ethical accountability other than the legislative environment in which the individual operates. So, on the level of routine practice, there is very little control, especially in terms of accuracy (Maher in van Noort, 2006, p 2).

The novelty of blogging and moblogging will drastically assist professional journalists with reporting. “The tools of journalism are changing, and as they become more widespread, citizens should play a more vital role in newsgathering” (Rutledge, 2003). Although the main news gathering will still come from major news organizations, it is possible that there is gap in the market here to develop a reliable platform for citizen news. At the 7th International Symposium for Online Journalism, with the discussion of media convergence, the suggested solution was to “make digital the primary platform” (Maher, 2006, p 45).

Yet citizen journalism as a whole is moving towards needing a verifiable platform itself. Erik Sundelof at Stanford University is a Fellow in the Reuters Digital Vision, “a

program that aims to develop technology to advance humanitarian goals in underserved communities” (Glaser, 2006). His research is proving to be dynamic and ground-breaking with the idea of setting up one global service which will receive all cell phone capturings. His prototype of this global service is currently under development at <http://www.InTheFieldOnline.net>. Sundelof envisions a positive future for citizen journalism with the hope that traditional media could merge with citizen journalism in order to create a “more complete truth” rather than a totally new medium.

A big concern with creating a service for citizen journalism is the moderation and filtering of the stories although Sundelof doesn’t seem as concerned about it.

To take the best of the old fashioned news organizations and bring in the power of the bloggers, because you have so many people investigating. Mix them and you have an extremely good organization and you’ll have content that’s really important in finding out the truth (Sundelof in Glaser, 2006, p 3).

Sundelof also supports the notion of cell phones being fundamental in developing nations like South Africa due to the limited infrastructure needed to set them up. The theory has already been tested in India and it has worked well in rural parts where people have been equipped to make their own documentaries (Sundelof in Glaser, 2006). Sundelof’s service is aiming at simplicity and being an open system. Although it seems tempting to agree completely with an open system, it is necessary that screening and gate-keeping of youth stories would be inevitable as there are many concerns about news gathering.

With the idea of the youth capturing news or views on cell phone camera, there are many issues that come to the fore. These include: news supply, news worthiness, trust worthiness, news screening, ethics, the issue of ‘free’ news, the market, gate-keeping of youth ideas and agenda setting. For now it is clearly established that the youth have a direct and noteworthy role to play in creating stories, capturing instant information and broadcasting a news platform for their market.

Although no system as such exists yet, it won’t be long before the dominance of cell phone cameras in newsgathering will be incorporated. It is noted though that there is a

greater gravitation towards the best technology. Television station etv is already involved with Vodacom in providing news visuals through the 3G model. The following fieldwork completed at etv highlights the need to be aware of the ethics involved in investigative journalism, as the cell phone camera works in a similar way to the spy camera. By taking into account etv's editorial guidelines, it is clear that youth stories will need to be screened and verified.

4.3 Fieldwork: etv - 3rd Degree

In order to platform the idea of the South African youth creating their stories for broadcasting, it was extremely valid that some work experience was gained at a current television station dealing with investigative journalism. For this media dissertation, fieldwork was completed at etv with the 3rd Degree team. 3rd Degree is the investigative journalism programme for etv.

During the fieldwork, two stories that were being investigated and produced were observed as part of preparation for this media dissertation. The stories were: *Smacked* by Sam Rogers and Mark Klusener and *Disqualified* by Lerato Ngcelwane and Megan Small. These stories will be briefly discussed, but the more important issue here is to look at the parameters that are involved in creating investigative journalism and ultimately what makes for good, ethical stories.

Smacked is the story of journalist who became a heroin addict and who is now putting her life back together again by staying clean from heroin. The story is presented as a stream-of-consciousness autobiography on camera. The fieldwork completed with this story mainly involved the process of assisting with the shooting of the overlays. This was interesting and valuable experience as it involved going back to the various places and taking important shots of different areas which related to the story.

Disqualified is the story of dope-taking amongst South African athletes. The story presented involves different athletes who have been banned for substance abuse whilst winning races. The fieldwork completed with this story was vast in comparison to the

first story. It involved a great deal of spy camera work and also included general logging of camera work, publicity and script writing for the investigative story.

Investigative journalism is used in this media dissertation to set up a framework of how things are working at the moment in such journalistic fields in South Africa. Although Project M does not propose to be only or mainly an investigative journalism platform for the youth, it is extremely important that boundaries are set-up to ensure a platform that adheres to a high quality of work and interest. As the cell phone camera would be used by youth to put forward their issues and stories, it implies a sort of investigative nature. By using the investigative journalism skeleton, this will hopefully ensure that the youth stories have a purpose.

With investigative journalism as a guideline for youth stories, the considerations of ethics and a code of conduct will also play a large role as Project M proposes that the youth make use of their cell phones with which to send information.

The television medium of investigative journalism is well established and utilized in South Africa. Yet for these programmes to function with a maximum effect, it is vital that they follow carefully on a set of ethics and code of conduct. 3rd Degree at etv strives to maintain the following standards in terms of their editorial, truth and accuracy.

e.news Editorial Guidelines reads as follows:

The goal of e.news is to present news of the highest ethical and editorial standards. We cover news without fear or favour and provide content that is independent, fair and accurate. We jealously guard our integrity particularly as the perception of e.news and its staff members rests on this reputation. We are constantly aware of the need to balance the right of freedom of expression and information with our ethical and legal responsibilities. These guidelines cover all news and current affairs programming on e.tv. All staff members including freelance workers are expected to read, be familiar with and understand how these guidelines apply to their duties. In addition to these guidelines – the Code

of Conduct for Broadcasters and the South African constitution form the basis for our interpretation of our conduct as journalists.

Truth and Accuracy

e.tv must provide news that is accurate. We aim to establish the truth and do this by weighing all the facts and checking our reports to ensure they are based on sound, factual information and reliable sources.

- News must be well-sourced. It is preferable for reporters to witness events themselves, if this is not possible they should rely on first-hand sources. At least two independent sources are necessary to establish accuracy of the information. On occasion we might rely on a single source but only with the expressed permission of senior editorial staff.
- We should not rely on agency sources unless independently corroborated.
- All interviews should be recorded on-the-record unless otherwise stipulated (see later details for guidelines on off-the-record briefings and confidential sources).
- If it is not possible to record an interview, accurate and detailed notes should be made and kept.
- We should not rely on websites that cannot be checked for accuracy.
- We must make every effort to check the credentials of contributors to our news.
- We must not use video material that has been digitally manipulated or reworked in any way so that it distorts the true content of the visual imagery.
- Trust is an important part of our brand and it is therefore important to admit mistakes and where necessary correct them.
- We discourage the use of “anonymous” sources, even in cases where that source is known to editorial staff.

(Patta, 2006, p 1)

These guidelines set out the important aspects to take into consideration when creating news and investigative journalism. From these guidelines this media dissertation proposes that content must be “independent, fair and accurate”. The act of balancing the right of freedom of expression and information with ethics is also vital as a foundation.

With regards to truth and accuracy, it would be vital that youth could attain information from reliable sources. Reliable information would be more attainable through the use of a cell phone camera, yet then other ethical considerations come into play and this information would need to be verified. To discuss this further it is important to look at the action of spy camera work as that can be closely related to cell phone camera work.

e.news Editorial Guidelines sets out guidelines with regards to secret recordings as below.

Secret Recordings

The recording of events and peoples is usually done openly and on the record. However, there may be the need as a last resort to secretly film or record a telephone conversation without consent.

- Public interest is the deciding factor here.
- e.news would usually only secretly film something in order to capture behaviour that would not normally be seen by the public.
- Secret recordings are usually only made when an open approach is unlikely to succeed and when it is clear that the material is necessary to establish the authority and credibility of a story.
- After the recording is made, the right of reply should still be offered.
- The decision to secretly film somebody or something is taken separately to the decision to broadcast.

(Patta, 2006, p 4)

The spy camera work done on the story *Disqualified* by Lerato Ngcelwane and Megan Small, gave solid insight into what goes into this type of work. Spy camera work involves a great amount of patience as the shooting is unpredictable and usually slow as results are not always obtained during the first or second or third attempt. For this story, it was on the fifth or sixth attempt that the researchers finally got information they had been looking for and which would be of use to the story. Another issue to take into account with spy camera work is that there is a danger involved when investigating

sources and also when revealing sources on television. This danger can never be taken lightly. The spy camera functions in a similar way to that of a cell phone as it is small and inconspicuous.

The cell phone's role as a tool in the media is growing steadily. It has similar functions to the way in which a spy camera is used in investigative journalism. Already there is evidence of the cell phone being used by embedded journalists, as well as by citizens who contribute towards news gathering. There are current developments in the mainstream media in accepting and incorporating the new digital media into news gathering. South Africa is fortunate to have the right foundation by means of freedom of expression from which to experiment and grow. This research shows how the cell phone could be used as a tool for the youth to platform their own news or stories.

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Chapter 5: Creative ideas for a proposed platform: Project M

This media dissertation has looked at the cell phone's current situation amongst the youth in South Africa. By understanding its role in two different spectrums, advertising and marketing, and then investigative journalism, this media dissertation proposes the following platform for the cell phone to act as a tool of gathering news stories about the youth's issues in South Africa. This platform seeks to propose the following elements: style, content, format, screening of news, and the effects such a platform could have for the youth. It is vital to look at Project M in the light of its potential usefulness to the media in South Africa and of what it would consist.

Style

Project M would primarily be a combination of a new media tool, the cell phone, with mainstream media, television, to produce a new, interactive and visual medium. As youth show a greater affiliation towards new media, like the cell phone and the Internet, their collaboration with mainstream media might seem strange. Why would television be interested in such a platform and further to that, why would youth allow censorship of what they wish to expose? Yet by combining television with cell phone production, an important link would form: subconsciously the two forms could rely on the other's strengths.

The youth are still very much mainstream media consumers and this platform could be the beginning of merging two different media forms. The cell phone has a far greater reach to instantaneous news gathering and could also provide specifics that traditional media ignores or can no longer access. Through this collaboration of old and new media styles, this would be a way of starting to unite different media and making use of these tools to bring out a new way of news gathering. By basing this platform on an established media stronghold, would ensure that the youth creations are realistically good enough to broadcast their views.

The style of Project M would have an investigative news slant to it as it aims to incorporate the cell phone as a tool of capturing information instantaneously and then

broadcasting it through the means of television. It is investigative as the cell phone acts as a type of spy camera in terms of collecting information as it is ubiquitous and can be anywhere at any time. At the same time, Project M could be an open platform which would include any artistic endeavours that would pertain more to the advertising and marketing function of the cell phone.

Project M could serve as an extension of some of the literature review findings based on education amongst youth with regards to cell phones. This platform could become an educational initiative for learners, at schools and Universities, to experiment with creating messages and producing material for media, advertising and marketing. This would develop a creative library of prominent youth issues and in turn, a way in which to reach with youth via their preferred medium of communication.

The style of the platform should be youthful and pertain to youth issues that are often not featured in mainstream news broadcasting. Due to this youthful element, the platform would portray qualities of curiosity, inquisitiveness, enlightenment and act as an educational tool for the youth to express themselves. Above all, Project M would be a proudly South African initiative that would boast the first ever platform as a voice to the youth. This could create a dynamic of social responsibility in a country that could definitely take the lead in such an arena.

Content

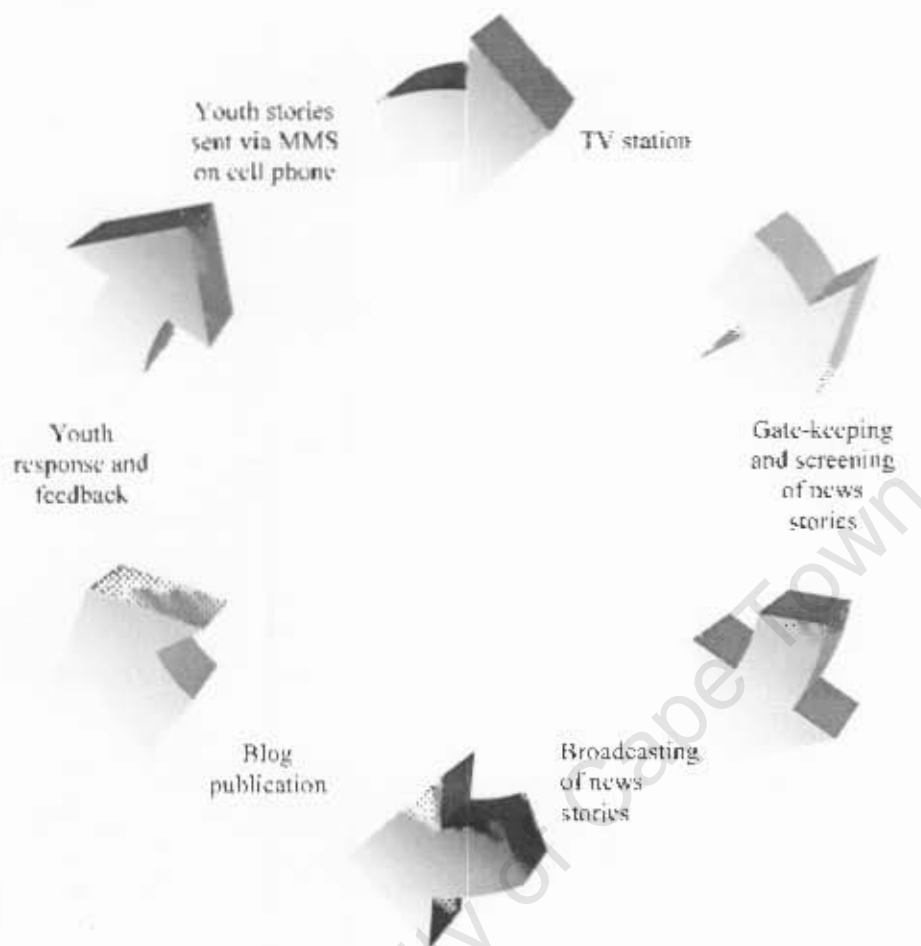
The content of Project M should display information that is news worthy and also trust worthy. This may at first seem a difficult standard to maintain as it involves the youth who are often marginalized because of their 'naivety' or 'ignorance'. However, with the platform being a part of a organized media structure i.e. a television station, this new media would be verified and controlled through a proper code of conduct and set of news ethics that exist in mainstream media to ensure it is of the highest quality and truth.

The content may contain news that pertains to any issues affecting the youth. Examples of issues pertaining to youth could include: culture, drugs, love, sex, sexual exploitation,

AIDS, violence, child rape, attacks, relationships, responsibility, jobs, art, youth trends, entrepreneurial ideas. These are mere examples of what issues might be affecting youth in particular and the content would ultimately be fixed by the youth themselves. Basically, the content should be about youth issues that can be aired and investigated and offered support. By making use of the cell phone video function, stories of these issues will be able to be distributed.

Format

The technological format of these youth stories will work as a MMS (multimedia message service) sent via cell phone to a television station for verification and then broadcast according to its validity. The quality of this format would vary depending on the type of cell phone camera quality that is used to capture the story. Post broadcast, it is suggested that the stories of importance are then set up onto a blog for publication and as a means for the youth to interact and comment on what they think. The cycle of information then moves back to the youth to create more stories of importance. A diagrammatic expression of this format can be viewed below. This diagram represents the format that the information would move by. Note how valuable it is that this is cyclical movement and that in no way is there an ultimate hierarchy dictating the movement of information. There is also a valuable gate-keeping and screening function in position with the mainstream media, the television station, which adds to the credibility and professionalism of the stories.



Diagrammatic

ic display of movement of youth stories through media for Project M

Screening

The function of gate-keeping and screening the youth stories would be imperative to the foundation of Project M. The following questions give rise to whether or not the stories form a sound enough production to be broadcast.

1. Are the story and its visuals ethical?
2. Is it news of interest to the public?
3. Where is the news supplied from?
4. Does the news story form part of the market involved in capturing it?
5. Can the source of the news be trusted and verified?

In looking at the very difficult task of gate-keeping these youth stories, this creative media production makes use of Pavlik's *Journalism Competencies in the Digital Age: Twelve Core Principles* (2005). This paper outlines what these competencies are in an age that is booming with digital media. Pavlik groups these competencies into two areas: tools and context. The following is a summary of Pavlik's competencies.

1. Tools: this includes news or information gathering; editing and production; storytelling; analysis, interpretation and synthesis; numerical competence; new media literacy.
2. Context: this includes media judgment; ethics; law; history; cultural breadth; civic knowledge.

(Pavlik, 2005, p 41-50)

"It is essential to maintain the highest standards of truth, accuracy, and fairness in today's digital age where trust and credibility of the news media is at an all time low" (Pavlik, 2005). As Pavlik speaks of the freedom of the digital press he states that it is only possible for journalism to become better through the use of proper competencies. "Journalists need to be more skilled than ever in reporting the news; they also need even higher ethical standards to maintain their credibility in an age when everyone can have a potentially far-reaching digital voice" (Pavlik, 2005).

Effects

The effects of Project M could be mostly positive and progressive. By making use of the youth's power, creative energy and access to information Project M could create the first youth news station of the digital age. It is viewed as important especially in terms of coming from South Africa, as this is creating not only a development of social responsibility amongst the youth interested in media, but it is also acting as a platform for future journalists.

As the title of this media dissertation insinuates "**Call on me**" is directed at the youth towards creative engagement with issues that most concern or interest them. It is also

about the fact that the marginalized group comes to the fore and thus the underdog is given a chance to perform and be depended upon. This further develops South Africa's entrepreneurial spirit. By using the cell phone as a voice tool for the youth, it is exposing the power of a multi-dimensional and faceted tool.

Conclusion

The youth stories for Project M would be a selection of proudly, truly, shockingly, devastatingly South African youth issues or stories collaged to form the first youth investigative news platform. The youth can make full use of their access to instant information with value.

The positive outlook of this media dissertation is that Project M would promote freedom of expression, communication, a sense of social responsibility, empowerment, creating a voice for the youth, the exploration of youth trends and ultimately a lifeline for the youth of today.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

“Today the cellphone has become so ubiquitous that its wonders to behold are commonplace, an astonishing part of everyday life” (Levinson, 2004). It is true that the cell phone is a phenomenal piece of equipment that assists everyday communication and is now infiltrating into the greater spheres of the media and advertising. Anyone who presumes the cell phone will never fully be integrated with today’s mainstream media is already behind in terms of technological developments. The cell phone is already here to stay, and its camera functions are revolutionizing the immediacy of access to information, especially in youth culture.

The completed research in this field of the cell phone as a multi-media tool of communication amongst the youth, in South Africa and internationally, assists in understanding the question of the youth producing their own stories or issues for marketing, advertising and journalism via the platform of Project M.

The current youthful energy that is growing in South Africa today breeds amidst the cell phone’s uses and likewise, its energy too. This is the digital age and it is only obvious that those who understand such an age filled with technological devices, the youth, may be able to take it to full realization.

Project M may seem like an extreme example of further democratizing the media space, yet it comes at a time when elements are in place. Cell phone communication is at an all time high in South Africa, along with the freedom of expression. By being a developing country, South Africa can afford to experiment with ideas that could lead to the forefronts of new and attainable opportunities. This is the development of youth journalism through the broadcast of cell phone cameras via television.

The pocket of your average teenager carries more than a funky tool of multi-media communication. It carries the weight of responsibility and opportunity. The following key concepts are drawn to conclusion from the relevant theory that has been reviewed. There is definitely a role for the cell phone as a multi-media tool of communication

amongst the youth. Furthermore, the youth do have the ability and chance to platform their ideas and news stories through Project M. Mainstream media can be integrated with new media to regulate and gate-keep a youth agenda of news. A platform like Project M only serves to create a greater media movement and change, and also social transformations. With the interest, support and co-operation of mainstream media, Project M stands a good chance of being set-up, and creating a sound relationship between mainstream and new media.

To conclude: the cell phone has become a necessity for South African youth as they depend on it constantly. This has created a well-informed, technologically-intelligent generation. Similarly, parents have come to depend on this form of direct and immediate contact with their children, although parental control of cell phones is a challenging task and raises complex moral issues. The South African youth are definitely the most viable market for cell phones as well as other gadgets. But are these tools of communication breaking down barriers as opposed to building them? Is there a loss of identity with this individualistic tool? Only further developments will tell the truth for the cell phone's place amongst the youth.

The Internet, independent of the cellphone, opened up vast stores and varieties of information to easy access. The addition of the cellphone means we can access this information, as well as talk to anyone, in the sunshine, on the beach, the mountain peak, or the slick streets in the pounding heart of the city, if we like. The cellphone means we no longer have to choose between information and reality, between conversation and nature. We can have them both. And if we'd rather not, we always can choose to shut the cellphone off, and be no worse off than any other human since the beginning of time (Levinson, 2004, p 178-179).

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